

NEWS AND OPINION MAGAZINE
OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP
OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES
AUG./SEPT 1979

IN UNITY

INCLUDING **The Gay Christian**

75 CENTS

“..FOR
SUCH A TIME
AS THIS.”



NINTH GENERAL
CONFERENCE
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

October 6, 1968 was one of the most frightening days of my life. I knew the Lord was leading me to start worship services in my home in Huntington Park, but as the hour approached, I was afraid no one would show up. What if it failed?

In spite of the haunting fear of police problems, twelve people gathered for worship, nine friends and three people I'd never met before.

I remembered the year before as I had felt God working in my life — calling me back even when I was so far down. I had broken up with the first real love in my life, and with the breakup came as suicide attempt. I remembered cutting both my wrists, climbing into the bathtub of running water, and hoping that I would die.

I awoke at the hospital, friends pacing, wrists bandaged. I was crying and feeling sorry for myself when someone shoved a news magazine in my hand. "Look," she said, "I don't know why you have done this, but it's stupid. I tried the same thing myself one time and I discovered how dumb it is. You're too young to even be thinking about death. I went on to make something out of my life, and you can, too. Why don't you look up?"

"Why don't you look up?" The years in church, the revival meeting preachers, the times with my aunt came back to me. "Look up" had always meant to seek God. I guess I had forgotten. I asked God's forgiveness for my stupidity as I remembered that I was the same person God had always loved. The memory brought with it a joy I hadn't felt in years.

The next day, it was still there. And as I thought about what had happened to me, the joy and the peace stayed.

"Wait, God," I said, "You can't do this — I'm a homosexual — a practicing homosexual, and the Church has told me you can't love me." The Lord spoke to me in an audible voice and said, "Troy, don't tell me what I can and can't do. I love you and you are my son. I don't have stepsons or stepdaughters." With that I knew the peace and the joy would continue to stay; I knew I could be a Christian and also a homosexual.

As I stood watching the people gather for the first service of Metropolitan Community Church, I knew I wanted them to know that peace of mind and soul was theirs, too. How could I tell them? Did I even understand it? I just knew it was true.

Years of training in the Pentecostal Church had taught me that they believe Scripture says homosexuality is wrong, yet I knew God loved me — all of me. The months that followed were filled with prayer, study, and re-reading the Scriptures. God kept telling me to re-read the Word, especially those passages that were traditionally used to condemn gay men and women. "God, I don't understand all this," I prayed. It was as if God kept saying, "Keep reading, you will."



As I began the worship service, I was still concerned. "Dear God, what if someone asks me to explain? What if I can't defend what I'm preaching? What if?" But God let me know again, "Just be still and know that I am God. I'll teach you if you'll listen."

Two weeks later someone called my home and asked to talk about what the Bible did (and didn't) say about being gay and Christian. The memory of that meeting brings with it the memory of the Holy Spirit as God truly brought together in my mind the teachings of the Scripture that I had been praying about and reading. During this time, as we celebrate our tenth year of ministry as a church, I would like to share again the vision that God gave me and the Gospel that I believe we are to preach in our Fellowship.

The Gospel, the good news, though one message of truth, can be understood best if we view it from different perspectives, remembering of course that we are bound to proclaim all of God's message, not selectively choose "what fits". In examining different perspectives, we must not divide ourselves into camps favoring one or the other — but instead remember that all perspectives are but attempts at describing the relationship that is possible between God and humankind.

The Gospel of Salvation

The first perspective of the Gospel is that of *Salvation*, the good news that all people may live in union with God as revealed to us by Jesus, the Christ. Members of the Lesbian and Gay Community (homosexuals) have been told for hundreds of years by those representing the Church, that we could not be gay and live in union with God; we've been told that we can't be gay and Christian. Yet Jesus *never* taught that. When he came he preached salvation for all people. In his dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Anointed One be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that God gave the only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but that the world through him might be saved. They that believe in him are not condemned, but they that believe not are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:14-18). The only thing necessary for salvation, as recorded in the New Testament, is faith that God, in Christ, reconciled us to Godself. We can live new lives — we have been redeemed. People with alternate lifestyles are not a special case. We are to preach that people are saved from loneliness, despair, and degradation through God's gift of grace as was declared by Jesus. Such grace is not earned, but is a pure gift from a God of pure love. *continued on page 14*



IN UNITY

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THE COVER is based on Robert Silo's winning design for General Conference IX.
ILLUSTRATIONS on pages 10 and 27 by Jean Gralley.

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Book Review

The Best Little Boy in the World
by John Reid
Published by Ballantine Books

John Reid's writing affected me in a way I haven't felt since reading *Rubyfruit Jungle* some years ago. *The Best Little Boy in the World* has been around since 1973. It is in a second, revised edition now and was published in paperback in 1977. To think the title as male-oriented or sexist would be a hasty judgment. The Rev. Elder Carol Cureton commented, "I found it fascinating easy for gay women to make the transfer, I think." So do I.

The title shows only that the book is a personal memoir, and that is its value. Reid presents us with a delightful, witty and significant chronicle of his own experience as a gay person. There are only a few brief tumbles into philosophizing about gay men in general. Apart from that he lets us become acquainted personally. We learn about his parents, his friends, his hangups. And he leaves us free to spin off from his experiences to new looks at our own. (I, too, as a small child, used to fantasize what would happen if I zipped off the tag that said, "Do Not Remove This Tag Under Penalty of Law!")

As an adolescent struggling to look straight, he says, "No one would ever catch ME at the 'HO' drawer of the New York Public Library card catalogue." (All I ever found in the "HO" drawer were books by Evelyn Millis Duvall — not noted for liberated insight.) Many of us will remember learning "to fake my way through high school." (It was a little easier for a Baptist boy who wasn't allowed to dance anyway.) We, too, "went to just enough parties to remain credible." But few of us have Reid's clever grasp of *le mot juste* and his recollection of those tiny grains that form the sandy beach of oppression. His great fantasy ("to be cowboys with Brian" and go off to Wyoming together) is marred by that oppression through the conditioning that "cowboys don't kiss" and "cowboys don't dance." Until he discovers, to his confused delight, that they *do*.

The one area to which MCC readers may not relate is that religion plays almost no role in Reid's life. For many of us, life

Rev. Michael England is a Minister of Christian Education at MCC San Francisco.

in relation to religion was a central problem to our gayness. His experience still shares great commonality with ours, though. That points up how much religion's reaction to sexuality is conditioned by society, instead of having its effect on society.

There is one thing in which I really feel fortunate over him. (Despite the fact that he calmly talks about his good looks and his fine, athletic body and other things that make me want to bite him on the leg.) Through God's grace I came out and found MCC at about the same time. So I had the support of a caring community and the guidance of developing Christian ethics. That may have spared me the alienation of becoming jaded and the desperation of feeling alone.

One of the crucial things Reid says is found in this turmoil over whether or not to reveal himself as gay. The familiar first stage is whether he should tell anyone. Then he agonizes over whom to tell, and then tells *everyone* The Big Revelation. Finally, he learns to respond to the closety criticism of revealing himself to his boss.

(It's a private matter, so why bring it up with your boss?) "When the unlikely day comes that no one *does* care that I sleep with guys, there will indeed be nothing to gay homosexual friends asks him the silly old question, "Would you take that pill and make yourself straight?" And his triumphant answer is "No, I wouldn't." As we can all joyfully learn, "That would be like killing myself." (This is a book that isn't hurt at all by giving away the happy ending.) He says later, with a dry reference to Dr. Reuben's silly and destructive book "I don't know that much about homosexuality. I only know what it was like for me to come to terms — or to begin to, anyway — with my own."

That exactly, is the enormous value of this book. As you read it, you think to yourself, "I could have written this book." (Lots of us fantasize being Great Writers.) But Mr. Reid's special wit and insight into aspects of his own life make him a special writer. And this is a very special and important book. I felt better and happier for having read it. †

LISTEN, CHRISTIAN!

REV. FRANK SCOTT

In the course of one of his parables, Jesus said to his disciples: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was a stranger and you invited me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me." And the King will answer and say to them, "Truly, I say to you, to the extent you did it to one of these brothers or sisters of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:31-40 NAS).

The words of Christ are clear and compelling in their simplicity. James sums up the same truth another way: "Faith without works is dead, being left by itself." (James 2:17).

Being a Christian is a life commitment. It encompasses all areas of our lives, our thoughts, our words, our actions. Too often we become so caught up in being religious — attending church services and meetings — that we neglect or forget to be Christian in this all-encompassing sense. We do things — and ignore people. The following poem addresses itself to us:

I WAS HUNGRY
and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger. Thank you.

I WAS IMPRISONED
and you crept off quietly to your chapel in the cellar and prayed for my release.

I WAS NAKED
and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.

I WAS SICK
and you knelt and thanked God for your health.

I WAS HOMELESS
and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.

I WAS LONELY
and you left me alone to pray for me.
You seem so holy; so close to God.
But I'm still very hungry
and lonely
and cold.

So where have your prayers gone?
What have they done?
What does it profit a person to page through a book of prayers
when the rest of the world is crying out for help?

Take a few minutes and evaluate your life in the light of Jesus' concern for "the least of these" brothers and sisters whom we meet along the way. †

The

Bottom

Line

t. earlye scott

I was sitting with my hands folded. I was hoping this pose would give me a pious appearance. To add effect, I slightly, but ever-so-slightly, bowed my head. If you bow your head too much you look like you're trying to impress someone. It's true I wanted to make an impression but I didn't want to look as though I was trying to do that. What I was really attempting to do was keep my body from shaking. I was nervous. So nervous that if anyone saw my face they'd know I was not the self-confident person I wanted to present. Having hands folded, head bowed, also prevented me from gaping at all the people.

After all, it had taken me eight months to get here and I wanted to make the best of it. While the organ bellowed I sneaked a look at my friend Carol who had brought me. I was also able to get a good look at the back of the minister's head. It was very difficult to get a good look at anyone else without being terribly rude and obvious. I had been brought up to behave in church so I exercised self-control, keeping my head in a rigid face-the-altar position. There was nothing left to do but pray.

The organ stopped and the service began. I don't need to tell you how much the service touched me but I do have to tell you that the sermon was excellent. I have to tell you that because my minister

strongly suggested I should work that into this article!

By benediction time my leg had quit bouncing uncontrollably up and down and I realized I was relaxing. I felt great. Lifted. I shouldn't have gotten so comfortable. Something horrible happened for which I was not prepared. "Hello, Ms. Scott," a voice said. I was stunned. I thought God must be talking to me since no one here knew my name. At least I hoped no one knew my name. It took a second before I decided it was highly unlikely that God would address me as Ms. Scott! I turned around expecting to see a vision. It happened again. "Hi, Ms. Scott." I was struck mute. My heart stopped and blood rushed to my head. By now the woman was standing next to me laughing. "How ya doin', teach?" Couldn't she see how I was doing? I was mortified. I knew her. She knew me. We knew each other. And to make it worse I couldn't remember her name. All I knew was that she had once been a student of mine. Horrors!

It occurred to me to say, "I'm not Ms. Scott. You must be mistaken." With any luck I was hallucinating. This couldn't be happening—for obvious reasons, it couldn't be happening. But it was definitely happening. By now I had lost any composure I had mustered up. I tried to fake it.

"How nice to see you again," I managed to reply. Gulp! It was anything but nice. Now I knew why it had taken me eight months to come to MCC. I was beginning to feel as though I should have waited another eight months. I was not, absolutely not, ready for this. I had panicked and this woman wouldn't stop laughing. She hugged me and I remembered her name. Cathy.

Cathy lost no time. She grabbed my arm and started introducing me to every single person in the place. I couldn't figure out why everyone kept laughing when Cathy would say, "I'd like you to meet Ms. Scott. She was one of my teachers." I certainly wasn't finding any humor in this situation. I prayed Cathy would know when to keep her mouth shut.

Truthfully, it had never crossed my obviously feeble mind that I would run into someone I knew. If it had, I probably would have stayed home to watch "Rhoda".

This thought was in my head when I heard more giggling near by. The laughter was coming closer. Two teenage boys were approaching. I really panicked. These two kids could easily be students of mine. Reality hit, and hit hard. Next week I might meet students from MY school. It could happen anytime, and probably when I least expected it. †

James Roy Whitby, Sr., a Southern Baptist pastor and evangelist is finding himself in serious trouble with the law these days, having been indicted in November, 1978 by a federal grand jury in Muskogee, OK on 27 counts of mail fraud, eight counts of securities fraud, and a few sundry and miscellaneous criminal charges.

Whitby did not have to bother surrendering, since he was already in the custody of the Federal Marshall in Tulsa, having been convicted of defrauding an 83 year-old woman of \$25,000 and the interstate transportation of that money in September 1978. In the recent charges against Whitby, the government alleges that he sold more than four million dollars of worthless *Gospel Outreach* bonds to persons throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe.

For more than 20 years, Whitby was the director of the Tulsa, OK branch of *Youth For Christ*. He resigned that position in 1968. As the director of YFC thirty years ago, he was responsible for bringing several persons to the realization of Christ as their Savior, including a Tulsa High School student by the name of Anita Bryant. †

fellowship family

LONDON, ENGLAND

Over the last few years, London has become the tourist centre of the world. We at MCC London recognize this fact and invite all who visit London to join with us to worship our Lord.

Unfortunately, with the chronic shortage of accommodations, we are unable to help in this respect, but we will try to make your stay in London as pleasant and happy as we can. We have a series of events for the summer, which everyone is welcome to share. Our two telephone contacts are:

Rev. Jean White 01-761-0248
Jim Heslop 01-898-4290

Our regular Sunday evening services are held at 7 pm every Sunday. †

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

One of the newest works in the Great Lakes District, MCC Ann Arbor began its ministry to that community in September, 1978. At the direction of the district, the Rev. Ted L. Richmond began a Feasibility Study in Ann Arbor. Within two short months, we became a Study Group, and as of May 1979 had achieved Mission status within UFMCC. Our growth has been steady and sure, both in spirit and size.

The congregation of MCC Ann Arbor has received many blessings since its inception. In November 1978 we entered into a rental agreement with the Northside Presbyterian Church, and our full rent for one year was paid in advance by a special friend of the congregation. We have an excellent working relationship with our host church, and are presently planning a Fall Carnival, to be held in September. Earlier this year, we hosted a highly successful dinner/dance with the members and friends of MCC Detroit as our guests.

In April of this year, MCC Ann Arbor was especially honored by the presentation of Michigan House Resolution No. 39, commemorating the formation of MCC in

Ann Arbor. At a special worship service, the resolution was presented to Rev. Richmond by State Representative Perry Bullard, a long-time advocate of human rights in the Ann Arbor community. †



SOUTH ATLANTIC DISTRICT

The spring conference of the South Atlantic District was held Memorial Day weekend at William B. Unstead State Park in Raleigh, NC. St. John's MCC of Raleigh was the host church.

More than 50 sisters and brothers shared the weekend which included three worship services, two workshops, and a business meeting. The Rev. Willie White, Worship Coordinator of St. John's MCC, was the preacher at the opening service Saturday evening.

All the delicious meals were prepared by a volunteer crew from St. John's MCC.

The highlight of the conference for many was the closing service. The Spirit moved greatly as Rev. Stan Harris preached and exercised his healing ministry by anointing and the laying on of hands. About two dozen people came forward to claim their healing. Praise God! It was an uplifting experience for everyone present.

The fall conference will be held October 21 in Nashville, TN. †

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

The experiences of 17-year-old Paul Gilbert of Providence in his attempt to attend his Junior Prom with a male date highlight the special oppression experienced by young gay people. As has been widely reported by the national media, Gilbert, founder of the MCC sponsored Gay Youth Group, attempted to, and was not allowed to buy Prom tickets for himself and his intended date whom he had to identify in advance. Ed Miskevich, a Brown University student and Youth Group facilitator. Gilbert requested a hearing before the School Committee on the school officials' decision, but the hearing was cancelled at the request of Gilbert's father after the story provoked national attention. The ACLU offered volunteer lawyers for the case but were blocked by a counter-suit brought by Gilbert's parents against any interference in their bringing up of their child.

The Junior Prom has a ritualistic import as a kind of first heterosexual official "coming out", but it ignores the needs of the gay student and Gilbert's action has been seen as thumbing his nose at his classmates' flaunting of their pubescent heterosexuality. But Cumberland High has a reputation in Providence of being especially macho and vicious toward gay kids. Threats of violence have forced school officials to accompany Gilbert between classes, and chants of "homosexual! faggot!" have filled the cafeteria during the entire lunch hour. While the young women and some teachers have been generally supportive, the fag-baiting has been carried on by the boys — perhaps because of insecurity in their own young sexuality.

Rev. Marge Ragona, Pastor of MCC Providence emphasized the courage of Paul Gilbert and the pain and oppression shared by gay high school students. Recalling her own coming out at 15 and taunts of "there goes the half-man, half-woman," she said, "I remember what it was like and I remem-

ber it was enormously painful.”

If Paul Gilbert's struggles do nothing else, we pray they may provoke attention for the desperate need for supportive, non-threatening environments for gay youth where they can be proudly who they are and experience themselves in positive ways.

†

Reprinted from *MCC News*, Hartford, CT.

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Easter at MCCR was magnificent -- the stateliness of the grand old building that recently became MCCR's new home intensified the majesty of the day.

Several members of the Tabernacle Baptist Church, which had previously owned and occupied the dignified edifice were present for MCCR's first service, in which Pastor Charles Larsen led the congregation in praising God for making it possible for MCCR to become the new owners. An attendance record was set at the first service in the new building, with 318 persons gathering to worship. MCCR's total active membership is 241.

Instead of the usual evening sermon, special poetry was read or recited, vocal and instrumental music was performed by several individuals, and the chancel choir presented Lenny Allen's cantata, "Calvary's Mountain", directed by Trish, who tirelessly rehearsed the choir for several weeks. 189 persons gathered for the Sunday evening service, marking another attendance record.

Gay Pride Week was celebrated in Houston for a ten-day period beginning on June 23. MCCR members did their part by coordinating a candlelight service at City Hall on June 26, and by hosting the service for the National Day of Remembrance on June 27 at the new church. The Rev. Troy D. Perry was the keynote speaker on both occasions.

Upfront, one of the community's finest publications and carrier of many of MCCR's regular advertisements and editorials, has donated a full-page, two-color ad in two different issues in an effort to secure funds to help renovate the fine old building. Anyone out there in MCC-land who has a soft spot in their heart for MCCR of Houston and would like to help restore the building dedicated to the King of Kings, please send your tax-deductible contributions to MCCR, 1919 Decatur, Houston, TX, 77007. Y'all come -- we've even got stained-glass windows. *D. Royce Williams* †

REV. ZIEGLER AND REV. RADCLYFFE HONORED AT UNION SEMINARY

Two UFMCC ministers received special awards during commencement exercises at Union Theological Seminary in New York City May 22. Only five such awards were presented at the ceremony.

The Rev. Karen Ziegler was the co-recipient of the Maxwell Fellowship, which is given to a member of the graduating class who "shows promise of excellence in future service to the parish ministry." The Rev. Ziegler is the Pastor of MCC New York.

The Rev. Nancy Radclyffe, Pastor of MCC Princeton, NJ, was the recipient of the Hudnut Award. It is presented to a "middler" (a student in the second year of a three year Masters of Divinity program) who "in the judgment of the faculty shall have made the best preparation for the preaching ministry." The award was accompanied by a \$400 check.

Ziegler and Radclyffe are the first UFMCC clergy to receive awards at Union. The presentation of these awards to MCC ministers is seen as an affirmation of our denomination's calling and ministry. †

◡ FELLOWSHIP FLASHES ◡

Congratulations to the Rev. Frank Scott, the Rev. Clifford Turpin, and the congregation of MCC Richmond, VA, who celebrated the first anniversary of that church's ministry June 11. . . . the congregation of MCC Sydney, Australia elected a new pastor May 20. The Rev. Donald Johnson (Tampa, FL) will assume pastoral duties after General Conference in August. . . . Congrats to David P. Steward, former Director of Counseling at MCC San Jose, CA, who was elected president of the California Assoc. of Human Rights Organizations in May. He is the Chairperson of the Santa Clara County Human Rights Commission, and is the only openly gay public official in that county. . . . The Rev. Dee Jackson has submitted her resignation from the pastorate of Alpha and Omega MCC (Brooklyn, NY) effective October 31. The pulpit committee has begun the search for a new pastor -- interested clergy should contact Jerry Cunningham, c/o A & O MCC, 50 Monroe Place, Brooklyn, NY 11201. . . . Congrats to the congregation of Trinity MCC (San Bernardino, CA) who installed their new pastor, the Rev. Paul Breton, May 13. . . . MCC churches keep reaching out to college campuses -- Pastor Randall Hill and the speakers bureau of MCC Sarasota, FL have received favorable reactions to their presentations for law and nursing classes at the Univ. of S. Florida. . . . Newly-licensed Rev. Reid Christensen and the congregation of MCC Illiano (Quincy, IL) received favorable press coverage from *The Index*, a publication at Northeast Missouri State U. . . . Pastors Bob Wolfe and Larry Gauer have resigned the pastorate of MCC Vancouver, Canada and have relocated in Sacramento, CA. The Rev. David Gunton, Canadian District Coordinator, was elected to the Vancouver pulpit and assumed duties in May. . . . the Rev. Larry Uhrig (Pastor, MCC Washington, DC) was a guest on *The Larry King Show*, a coast-to-coast late night radio call-in program. The June 28th program consisted of a two-hour interview, and three hours of answering questions from the nationwide broadcast audience. Rev. Uhrig reports he has begun receiving mail from all over the country responding favorably to his appearance on the program. . . . Congratulations to all the newly-licensed ministers of the Fellowship. . . . the Mid-Central District Board of Home Missions has authorized feasibility studies in the cities of Colorado Springs, CO, St. Joseph, MO, and Sioux City, IA. . . . the Rev. Valerie Bouchard was chosen Interim Pastor of MCC Milwaukee, WI. . . . Congratulations to Pastor George Covington and the congregation of MCC of the Palms (Ft. Myers, FL) who dedicated their new church building July 22. . . . the national news media turned its attention to MCC Albany, NY Worship Coordinator John Kuiper, who was recently granted permanent custody of a 13-year-old boy he adopted a year ago after the court reinvestigated the case in light of Kuiper's declaration of his homosexuality. Kuiper and his son Alden have since appeared on the Phil Donahue Show, and a feature article about them appeared in a July issue of *Us* magazine. Kuiper has been contacted by a Hollywood film producer who is interested in making a TV movie about their experiences. Kuiper, who holds ministerial credentials in the Reformed Church, is facing yet another battle -- the attempts by members of that denomination to strip him of his credentials because of his homosexuality.

SAN JOSE PASTOR RECEIVES JAIL TERM AND FINE FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The trial of MCC San Jose Pastor Sky Anderson and eleven other individuals who committed civil disobedience against the Lockheed Corporation (for building nuclear weapons) began May 21. A jury found all twelve of them guilty, but despite the judgment, it was a time of growth and consciousness raising for all concerned. The following are some of the Rev. Anderson's feelings about and observations of the proceedings.

The Editor

"One of our strongest points was brought out on the first day of trial, when we applied for an acquittal or dismissal on the grounds that the Lockheed Company stands on Navy-owned land, and therefore we should have been tried in a federal, not municipal, court. This was very important to us since we wanted to use International Law as appt of our defense — we wanted to call the government accountable on the fact that they were violating agreements that deal with "just war." However, the DA brought in Lockheed representatives with papers which supposedly "proved" that Lockheed property was not owned by the U.S. Navy, and despite the fact that we were not satisfied with their "proof", the judge evidently was, and denied our motion. In our appeal, which is coming up, we are hoping to again stress this issue.

"It was clear the jury had a hard time finding us guilty; when they came in to deliver the verdict, not one of them would look at us, and we could see them agonizing over the whole trial. When the judge polled

DES MOINES, IOWA

Certain sections of the article in the Apr/May 1979 issue of *In Unity* caused some misunderstandings and we wish to clarify these sections.

Not every member of MCC Des Moines attended the revival. Of those who did attend, many, but not all, were slain in the Spirit upon receiving the Holy Spirit. Some of the other people attending the nightly services did believe that there had been deliverances from homosexuality, but this was not true of all people in attendance.

We apologize for any misunderstandings caused by this article. *Cathy Elliot* †

each juror individually, some were very firm, almost defensive in their reply of "guilty", while others just hung their heads while answering. A couple of the jurors started to cry, and one woman, when asked by the judge if she felt we were guilty said, "Yes, regrettably." Even when the judge dismissed the jury, they just continued to sit there and wouldn't leave, so we got up and gave the whole jury a standing ovation.

"The following week, May 30, the twelve of us went back to court for sentencing. Most of the first-offenders were given three days in jail and one year's summary probation; the judge tried to give the women mere fines, but they wouldn't accept them, and said they didn't want to be treated differently than the men. Only three of us were really cross-examined by the judge. One was Bob Aldrige, a former Lockheed engineer who since leaving the company has dedicated his life to traveling around the country and speaking out against nuclear armaments. He, his wife, and their ten children have taken a vow of simplicity for world peace, and he would not back down in court. Because this was his third offense, he was given thirty days in jail and one year's summary probation. The second person receiving a stiffer sentence was Father Larry Purcell, also given thirty days and one year's summary probation. I was the third person, and even though this was my first offense, I was given ten days in jail

and one year's summary probation. All of these sentences, of course, are pending appeal.

"I feel that when the judge cross-examined me, he was trying to get me to back down and say that I was sorry for what I'd done. When he asked me if I planned to do it again, I replied that because of my calling as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, there was no way I could be silent about that plant and the weapons being built there, knowing that one warhead could annihilate 408 cities. "Who is my mother and my brother and my sister?" I asked him, the same question Jesus the Christ asked so many centuries ago. The judge merely replied that all of us were trying to be martyrs and use the courtroom to plead our case. I stated that the law of God reigns supreme over all other laws and all other courts.

"In July, those not appealing will be serving out their sentences, including a nun, and another woman who is 72 years old. I pray that we as the body of Christ within our own denomination will also feel the need to respond to the world situation and ask within our hearts, "Who is my mother, and my brother, and my sister?" For me, this demonstration was not a political action, but a highly spiritual one — a declaration of my faith in the sanctity of all life, and a protest against the blasphemy of nuclear terror." †

NEW FREEDOM EVANGELISTIC TEAM

WE, THE EVANGELISTIC TEAM, have been shocked at how the price for gas is going up up all the time. We expected it, but we didn't know how much. We burn regular in the truck which is harder on the engine, but cheaper. If we have just a few people to share this expense, we won't have to raise our budget for spiritual renewals. We are asking that any of you that can donate \$5 per month for gas, please fill out form below and send it to us. This way we can know how we are going to keep up with this expense. We have already put 9,000 miles on our new bus and we project another 20,000 miles or more by the end of this year. That is a lot of gas. If you want to help, please contact us so we can project our travel expenses. God bless you for your help and faith!

I would like to pledge \$ _____ per month until 1980 for gas. I will be sending it on the ____ of every month to P.O. Box 371, Galena Park, Texas 77547.



Name _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Church _____

I'm sitting in bed — 9:30 pm — after a non-stop 15-hour day at the office. My feet hurt — my bones hurt! For a minute I wonder if it's worth it. I know that if I had one more ounce of energy I would already have used it. My gut tells me it is worth it whether I understand it or not. (I wonder if the Holy Spirit would appreciate being referred to as 'my gut'?)

I watch this Fellowship from a curious perspective, both spiritually and organizationally. I've been, and continue to be, in an incredible spiritual growth process! It's as if God is running around in my head, plugging in circuits to connect previously unconnected observations. I've always been a curious person — the "whys" of life sustain me. I collect observations and bits of information as a child collects toys. The emotional "rainy days" spent sifting through the toy box have become an expression of prayer. When I am away from it, it calls to me. I am more alive somehow, more whole when I constantly look for how God is revealed in the creation that surrounds me. How fun it is to find God in creation — just to be able to find God is good enough, but it's fun, too! Puts a whole new meaning on milk and honey, doesn't it?

One of the most fascinating/frustrating things to watch is our Fellowship's peculiar "ecumenism". We come from so many places, societies, economies, eras. We come from everywhere and share a language that has so many languages within it that it scarcely provides the familiar security or real communication that we need to provide us with points of reference to steady us in our incredibly fast-paced journey. Very little is stable around us, because we have not yet learned to communicate with each other; we can't appreciate the stability of our common faith. When I learned to be more like a child again, (where did I hear that before?) and learned to play with the world around me with the reverence of a child, I began to see from another perspective. I began to see more of the similarities in the spiritual journeys of the diverse groups in the Fellowship. Everybody's seeking the same thing, really — God's will, I mean. Living in union with God some of us call it.

It's as if I can sometimes stand apart and see from another angle. I see good people, all searching for the same thing, all saying basically the same things (if you

Rev. Cureton is an Elder of the Fellowship.

look hard enough for the real message), but unable to hear each other. They are (we are) then unable to draw strength from each other. Instead of learning the unique contributions of our differences, we revert to the old, automatic defenses that try to stamp them out like antibodies after the elusive virus! I am constantly amazed at the otherwise loving people who retreat periodically to their blind areas where "it's still OK to not be loving until that other SOB is first!" The unfortunate objects of this type of defensive judgment, who bear the unspoken demand to reassure our self-concepts by mirroring what we "ought to be", get pushed further and further away.

In our obsession to defend our rightness before God and humanity (why do I think it more correct to write "man" here?) we perpetuate and institutionalize the separation that embodies all concepts of sin.

I suppose what I'm saying is that we need to call forth the gift of interpretation in our midst — in ourselves perhaps. It's there already — if we will just risk articulating it!

I stand in the middle of all this, closer to God every day, and watch the people of the Fellowship standing in closed circles facing inward — crying to God for unity and closeness. Each one crying out of the desperation of their souls, each saying practically the same thing, differing only in the language they use to say it. (The sameness is in the need, in the condition of the soul, not in the immediate belief or action grasped as a "solution".)

If we could just hear each other! I am convinced we will — with the power of pentecost freed from within us in the process. God's spirit is leading and teaching and stretching people all over the world.

For this to break forth in the Fellowship, those who are experiencing the stretching are going to have to say so; those who got tired of stretching before anyone else did are going to have to get back with it — we need you; those who have stretched enough to see even more of God's love, magnitude, and gentle warmth are going to have to risk being labeled heretic by those who cling to the familiar security of the distant, angry God.

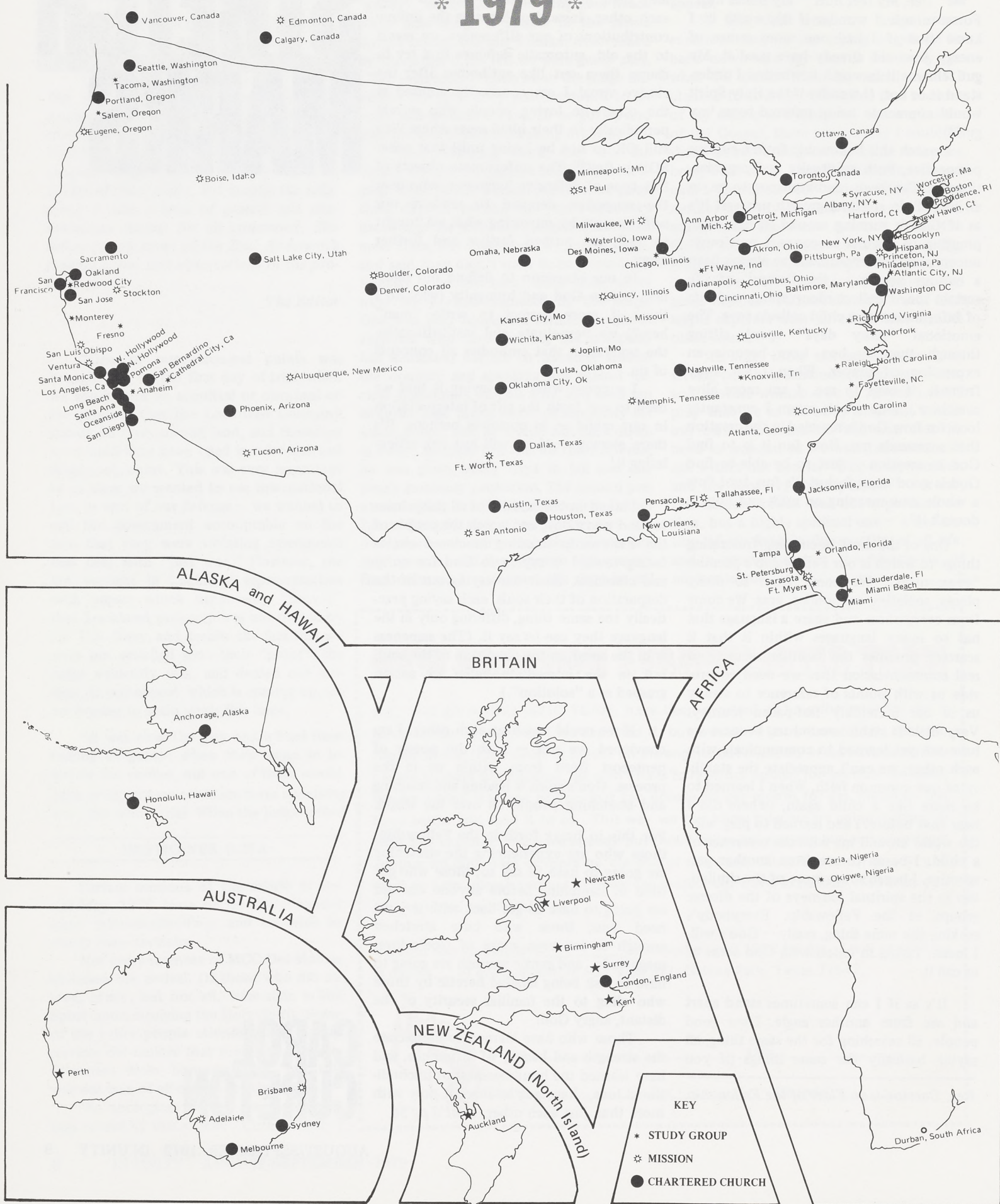
Those who have learned to appreciate the strength and beauty of difference, and have learned the boundlessness of unconditional love, have got to share it now with more than just each other. *cont'd pg 30*

STRETCH MARKS

CAROL CURETON

THE FELLOWSHIP TODAY

* 1979 *





WE ARE FAMILY

While planning this issue, Jean and I decided that it would not be complete without an article highlighting the UFMCC's history. Having been involved for only three years, I knew relatively little about the evolution of the UFMCC. So, curiosity overruling reason, I decided to pen the article. I attacked the myriad of past conference reports and minutes of Elders' meetings, intending to produce a concise, logical account of the UFMCC's past. The scenario I actually came up with defies brevity and logic. I suppose that can be said for most miracles. No sooner than I thought I'd found a method to the madness, confusion would take over, and I'd be lost again.

In a way, that's a fairly accurate description of the early days of MCC. Confusing. Exciting. Everything but simple or impossible. If there is one thing that stands out in my mind more than anything else after reviewing the Fellowship's brief history, it is the absolute certainty that God is in this with us. Were I to talk with someone who doubts the existence of God, I would point out the survival and growth of MCC as positive proof, not only of God's existence, but of God's power, compassion, and love as well.

The UFMCC was born out of mainstream Christianity's refusal to recognize gay people as anything but abominations in

the eyes of God. After hearing this dismal pronouncement so often for so long, gay people began to believe it. A friend's desperate declaration that "God doesn't care about me" awakened the young Troy Perry to the continuing injustice perpetrated on gay men, lesbians, and others by the church. He began a church which would welcome everyone, but it is doubtful that anyone at the initial worship service of MCC-Los Angeles foresaw the incredible growth that occurred. In those early days, MCC-LA was struggling for basic survival, trying to find ways of anticipating and meeting the needs of the LA community. Consequently, little emphasis was placed on branching out. Apparently God had other ideas, however, continually sending people to the Rev. Perry to, as he puts it, "bug the daylight" out of him about beginning MCC works in other cities. One such person was the Rev. Howard Williams, then a layperson and former Presbyterian minister, who hounded Rev. Perry about preaching in San Diego, CA until Troy gave in. That first service in San Diego was held in a wedding chapel, the Chapel of the Chimes, and brought 67 people together. The Rev. Howard Wells founded MCC San Francisco shortly after, and was later instrumental in the establishment of MCC-NY and other groups.

This expansion seemed very natural, and because the churches were relatively close together, keeping the "family" feeling intact wasn't really a problem. The willingness of the Rev. Arthur Green to establish an MCC in Chicago, IL, and the emergence of the Phoenix, AZ congregation, changed all that. Inquiries about MCC arrived from all over the United States. More and more people wanted an MCC in their respective areas. MCC was growing, stretching, and it became necessary to provide some means of binding the various groups together. The revelation of the direction, and the expression of the vision of MCC began to expand, nudging us toward newer unknowns.

In the early days, it was thought that MCC would "preach itself out of business",

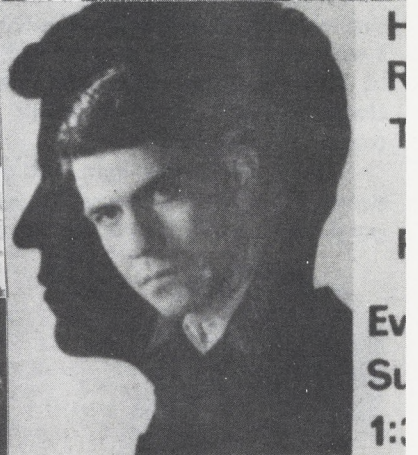
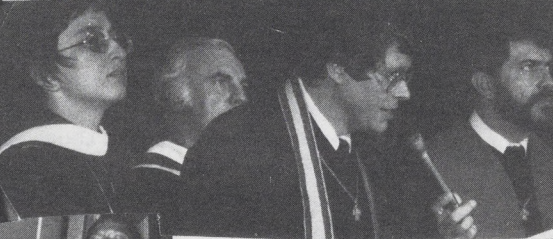
lasting only until the consciousness of other denominations was sufficiently raised to the point where gay people were accepted and welcomed in their former churches. It didn't take long to realize that we'd better not hold our breath until that happened. The need for a common doctrine and organizational structure quickly surfaced.

The MCC-LA Board of Directors appointed an organizing committee (which became the first Board of Elders) to work toward satisfying that need. Four men — the Rev. Perry, the Rev. John Hose, the Rev. Richard Ploen, and the Rev. Lou Loynes (then a layperson) — drew up the articles of incorporation and authored the first by-laws. The Rev. Ploen coined the name "Universal Fellowship" for the denomination — it stuck, and was officially adopted at the first General Conference. The Rev. Ploen and the Rev. Loynes handled matters pertaining to the structure and funding of the denomination, while the Rev. Perry concentrated his efforts in the areas of ministerial preparation and credentialing. The Rev. Hose authored the Statement of Faith and organized doctrinal matters. After this initial work was completed, an annual gathering, or General Conference, of all MCC congregations was proposed. At the first General Conference (LA, 1970), five MCC groups were represented (MCC-LA, MCC San Diego, MCC San Francisco, MCC Chicago, and MCC Phoenix). The major actions of the conference were the election of the first Board of Elders and the approval of the preliminary work of that Board.

By the following year, the UFMCC had grown to 14 churches and 5 missions. Prior to General Conference II (LA, 1971), the Elders divided the churches into seven districts and named these districts according to their member states (i.e. Wisconsin — Illinois District, etc.). They appointed District Coordinators, established district conferences, and set the membership for the Board of Home Missions as the Elders and *cont'd. page 14*

Donna Wade is Editor of In Unity.





Metropolitan Community Ch
Temporarily meeting at
6205 Miles Ave., Huntington





photo collage by donna wade

WADE *cont'd from pg 11* District Coordinator nearest the proposed mission. (District Boards of Home Missions are currently comprised of the Pastors of all chartered churches in the district, the District representative to the Committee on Lay Concerns, and the District Coordinator). In October 1971 the Elders established the By-laws Committee. Each District was instructed to form a three-member committee to forward recommendations on bylaw proposals and revisions to the Fellowship committee, whose task it is to receive, organize, and evaluate these suggestions.

From the outset, the necessity for qualified, well-trained clergy and lay people was recognized. Christian education continues to be high on the UFMCC's list of priorities. Samaritan Bible Seminary was established in 1970, under the direction of Dean Richard Ploen, to begin the ever-increasing challenge of educating UFMCC people. The school's name was changed to Samaritan Bible School in March of 1974, and in 1976 the school was named Samaritan Theological Institute. STI has grown tremendously over the years, and, under the guidance of the current Dean, the Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, the school was authorized by the state of California in 1978 to confer "exempted" degrees in theology (recognized only within the UFMCC) upon its graduates. One of the goals of the school is to satisfy the necessary financial and staffing requirements to gain full accreditation as a seminary.

By General Conference III (LA, 1972), the UFMCC encompassed 24 churches and 11 missions and study groups. Many important facets of the UFMCC's outreach originated during that conference. The Social Action Committee report indicated the need for affirmative action, pointing out the failure of the Church to address itself to the needs of women, and suggesting that special attention be given to women expressing religious callings "so that they may be allowed *qualifying* experiences in this church."

General Conference III directed the Board of Elders to form a National Board of Evangelism and World Mission, whose duties included: 1) implementing new churches; 2) encouraging spiritual renewal in the congregations; and 3) establishing special ministries to prisons and other particular groups. The Rev. Lee Carlton was the first Chairperson. This Board, which became the Board of World Church Extension in 1974, is currently headed by the Rev. Elder Freda Smith, the Executive Secretary for WCE.

Within the National Board of Evangelism and World Missions, the National Board of Prison Ministry was established to provide: 1) a ministry of word and sacrament to men and women in prison; 2) pastoral counseling and personal services to prisoners (the long-standing letter-writing ministry, as an example); and 3) parole support. The Rev. Joseph Gilbert was primarily responsible for developing guidelines for the Board and its prison chaplains. In 1974, he and the Rev. Dick Mickley developed and published a Prison Ministry Handbook, which has been used as source material for numerous denominations implementing a ministry to prisons. The name of this Board was changed to the Board of Institutional Ministry (USA) in 1975, and is currently directed by the Rev. Bob Arthur.

1973 was a year of testing for our young denomination. Often referred to as the Year of the Refiner's Fire, four MCC churches were destroyed, either by arson, or by fires "of undetermined origin." On January 27, the Los Angeles church was torched, followed by MCC Nashville, TN March 4, and MCC San Francisco July 27. The most devastating and tragic of the fires occurred June 24 at MCC New Orleans, in which 30 people (including the Pastor, the Rev. William Larsen) lost their lives.

1973 was also the year which showed MCC'ers that the new denomination was not devoid of, or immune to, conflict and controversy. Three congregations—Denver, CO; Colorado Springs, CO; and Austin, TX— withdrew from the Fellowship. The first conference held outside LA was held in Atlanta, Georgia that year. The theme for General Conference IV was "Onward As One", and 32 churches, 12 missions, and 3 study groups sent representatives. In anticipation of the different needs of UFMCC people for personal spiritual development, a Commission on Religious Orders, chaired by the Rev. Jim Sandmire, was established and commissioned for two years, to investigate and evaluate different forms of religious communities or orders. The Board of Elders expanded from four to seven members that year, and the Rev. Elder Freda Smith was elected, the first woman to hold that position in the UFMCC. In addition to her newly-acquired responsibilities as an Elder, the Rev. Smith was also selected to organize and chair a Women's Commission, an outgrowth of the affirmative action stand of General Conference III. Also in 1973, the 5% tithe of member churches, originally initiated in 1970, was raised to 8%—5% to the UFMCC administrative offices; 3% for Samaritan,

continued page 32

TROY PERRY *cont'd from front inner cover*

Again, God let me know that Jesus' message and life were for all people. In a flash of recognition God reassured me and let me know that all people could experience God's salvation, that people could truly live as God's people with apologies to no one.

I remember the excitement the first time I read the words of Isaiah when God spoke to the sexual minorities in the Old Testament. The words seemed to leap out at me, "For thus saith God, unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. . . .for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." (Isaiah 56:4-5,7).

I rejoice that I can give testimony today that my salvation is real. I sometimes say that the epitaph I want on my tombstone is found in a song that we sing in many of our churches, "It Is Well With My Soul." I'm determined that, even in death, I'm going to have a testimony so that people will know that when I went out to meet God it WAS well with my soul and that God's love is with us always in this life and for all time to come. Thank God we live in a day the Church of Jesus Christ is becoming "the house of God for all people" and in a day when the UFMCC can proclaim boldly that God's salvation is for ALL.

The Gospel of Community

The second aspect of Jesus' message is the Gospel of *Community*, the good news that we who were not a people God has made a people. In our society, we have increasingly come to see people as naturally and inevitably in an isolated and adversary relationship, competing with each other for survival. The conclusions about the omnipotent Creator to which that line of reasoning leads are as spiritually oppressing as they are inevitably in conflict with our spirit's understanding of love. Jesus lived and taught that, rather than being adversaries, each individual shares a relationship with each other one by virtue of their common created-ness—joint heirs with Christ—created in God's image. Because of this shared relationship, God teaches us that our lives are fulfilled, they

continued page 31

TWO STONES, ONE BIRD



Rhea Miller

Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in a resource book compiled by the women of the National Gay Task Force for the lesbian community. However, we feel that the thoughts and observations the Rev. Miller shares are similar to those experienced by both gay men and women with regard to the religious community. We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of Ginny Vida and the publisher, and hope the readers will enjoy this account of one person's struggle.

DJW

W e come so many full circles in our lifetime. I am again the child who sat in the overstuffed chair in the corner reading biographies. For some unknown reason I had decided to read the story of Jesus in one of the Gospels. I was not a reader of the Bible in the normal course of events as a child, but I had picked up the Bible this particular day and was reading about the Crucifixion. Big tears began to roll down my face just when Dad walked through the living room where I was sitting. He saw me crying and asked what was wrong. "How could they do this to Jesus? Leave him all alone? He loved those people." And Dad replied, "You're well on your way to understanding." I may have been, but it was another fifteen years before I could recapture that spiritual awareness.

I was raised in the Church, my father being a rural midwestern pastor. I took religion and the Church all very seriously but I never considered myself very religious or spiritual because I couldn't pray right (God never spoke or responded to my

prayers) and I felt no emotional attachment to God in my heart, or so I thought. I was intrigued by religious people and loved questions about religion. I became a religion major in college because those classes were the only ones that dared ask the questions I had to ask. Who was this Jesus anyway? What makes right and wrong? Isn't God only a rationalization after all? I studied theology voraciously but it all dead-ended with more unanswered questions and seemingly endless rationalizations. I became a master of theological issues and discussions but it all seemed so worthless, so lifeless. And the Church — the Church seemed the epitome of hypocrisy and irrelevancy. The Church in no way seemed to relate to the real world as I saw it. The pain, suffering, and laughter that was life to me was refused mere recognition in churches. Therefore, I left religious discussions and I left the Church.

I entered the secular world unfettered by religious obligations for five years. I finished school, drove a dump truck, sang the lead in a rock combo, and was the baker for a large resort kitchen. About three years into this pilgrimage I discovered and actualized my lesbianism. Religious considerations played no role in this discovery as I'd never been a biblical literalist (a phenomenon of the Enlightenment and not the early Church) nor could I conceive of "loving", regardless of whom, as ever being sinful. In fact, even being the agnostic that I was, I saw my love of a woman as a gift of God. My pilgrimage into the world continued until I hit rock bottom in my personal life. I had successfully

isolated myself from my family, professional aspirations, a lover, and any personal expectations. In this state of humility I learned that I had unintentionally hurt a dear friend very badly. There was no way I could forgive myself. And walking swiftly out into the night air heaving sobs of regret, I cried out, "I'm sorry," and without thunder and lightning or visions in the sky, I became aware of "Okay. It's about time. You're forgiven. Just keep walking. You have promises to keep and miles to go before you sleep." It was not just a feeling or a cognitive understanding. It was a whole awareness that filled and joined my entire body. I was in touch again after so many years with my spirituality. Religion became a matter of discovery and not learning or modeling. Everything was new. I was a child again.

In my new discovery I learned how people kept letting words get in the way. I became aware of a Reality in my life that I saw in other people's lives, but unless I spoke about this Reality with the right words, my Reality was denied or considered immature, distorted, or inconsistent. People said that the Bible said homosexuals were sick and yet I knew I wasn't sick and I knew the Reality within me not only accepted but embraced my life as God-given. I learned to *continued pg. 24*

Reprinted with permission from the book, *Our Right To Love* by Virginia Vida and the National Gay Task Force, copyright 1978 by Virginia Vida. Published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 07632.

Letters

I would like to respond to the question asked by the STI article, "What Can Samaritan Do For You" (*In Unity*, Apr/May 1979). It is a wonderful and exciting thing to see our own theological school growing up on the solid base of the UFMCC. The school can do much for me, even though my native language is Spanish, because I have learned enough English to be able to follow any course material that might be offered. But many others are not as fortunate as I am. Through no fault of their own they find themselves unable to read, write, or speak English effectively. In short, we are faced with the reality of a large Spanish-speaking population in this country, many of whose members have not mastered English.

UFMCC has started to build a Spanish-speaking ministry with its MCC Hispana in New York City and with other efforts to reach Spanish-speaking gays. These new ministries require clergy and lay people who are educated in the language they will use in their congregations. Some of these people are fully bilingual. Many others, however, are not bilingual, and these people are currently excluded from the opportunity to study at STI.

The whole ministry of UFMCC is based on the belief that the church's duty is to seek out its lost sheep, not sit back and wait for the lost sheep to return to the flock on their own. Spanish-speaking people are such lost sheep, especially Spanish-speaking gays. They must learn English, we say, if they want to be admitted to STI. But haven't we heard of certain churches that have insisted that we become straight in order to become accepted?

If we are to be a truly universal Fellowship and a true community, we must not restrict our church or its institutions to the "Jews" — those who speak English — but must also carry it to the "Gentiles" — those who don't speak English, or, for that matter, those who differ from the majority in any respect. (See Acts 10:47; 11:48.)

Where a large non-English-speaking minority is concerned (and Spanish-speaking people are the largest minority in the United States today), we must make particular efforts to provide instruction and training in the appropriate language.

Therefore, I recommend, and pray that God our Lord will put it in your hearts to introduce:

- 1) STI instructors qualified to *teach* in the Spanish language.
- 2) Courses given in Spanish by correspondence as well as in residence.
- 3) Tests for admission to candidacy for the ministry given in Spanish as well as English.

The seed of this ministry to Hispanics has sprouted, and the soil is fertile and deep. Let us not allow this young ministry to wither and die for lack of watering and cultivation. Let us rather care for it, so that it may bear fruit a hundredfold.

In Christ Jesus,

Rev. Jose L. Mojica
MCC Hispana

Rev. Dee Jackson
Alpha and Omega MCC
Brooklyn, NY

Dear Rev. Mojica,

Thank you very much for your letter regarding the development of STI programs and materials in the Spanish language. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank you for your continued dedication and efforts in this area of our ministry.

I believe that we should now begin implementing this translation project. If we all work patiently together, we will have a very good start. We could begin with some of STI's existing materials, or any other items that you would consider to be higher priority. If you would assume the responsibility of coordinating the translating, the UFMCC Department of Publications would then stand ready to assist in the production. Please let us know how you feel about this. God bless you!

Rev. Carol S. Cureton
Administrator

The Board of Home Missions, including at its meeting almost all the men and women of the District clergy, of the Southeast District wishes to prayerfully present its concerns regarding the editorial content of the last two issues of *The Gay Christian* appearing within *In Unity*. Specifically we refer to the article entitled "Is the Church Sexist? Is the Pope Catholic?" by the Rev. F. Jay Deacon, editor of *TGC*, in the Feb/Mar issue, and the article entitled "Creation Myths: Bridges to Human Wholeness" by the Rev. Karen Ziegler, in the Mar/Apr issue.

It is our belief that while each article raises issues and seems to reflect scholarship in the areas of comparative religion and the history of Biblical development, what, in fact they do, is create confusion, misunderstanding, and even division in the minds of lay persons, as well as clergy, of our Fellowship.

It is not that we wish to stifle theological inquiry or have persons with ambivalence or ambiguity share their faith strivings and struggles with us. It is, however, probably most inappropriate to use the journal pages of *The Gay Christian* for speculative theology that creates faith problems within individuals and congregations, when indeed the need for unity in and among our congregations is one of our pressing denominational problems. We fully realized that *the Gay Christian*, as a theological journal (probably more appropriately addressed to the clergy and those interested lay persons), is printed within *In Unity* as a matter of economics.

In Unity, however, is the news and evangelical journal of this Fellowship, wherein most people seek information and encouragement and when the theological content included in *TGC* section is such as to not open dialogue but create confusion and even give scandal to the faithful, we believe the Board of Elders and the editors of *In Unity* and *The Gay Christian* should consider the deleterious effect of running articles of obvious controversial and perhaps even heretical content.

And, while agreeing, as our District Coordinator says: "We should be able to think and hear unthinkable thoughts", and while it would seem appropriate that growth experiences be present within our denominational publications, it does seem totally inappropriate to officially release

(even with disclaimer) speculative theological arguments that call into ill repute Biblical authenticity, and the clearly stated Doctrine of the UFMCC, and smacks, as one Elder says, of "both paganism and heresy."

Finally, in essence, respecting person's opinions and their right to express them, we believe that releasing radical opinions that are often mostly the personal agenda of some writers is more injurious to new and young Churches, new and young Christians than can be compensated by filling the need for "cutting edge" theological speculation in our denomination.

We respectfully recommend that if *The Gay Christian* is not able to be separated and circulated to a more specialized audience, we feel it should then contain contributions more conducive to faith building and encouraging the doctrine and unity of our Fellowship.

Yours in love and regards,
Members of the Clergy of the
Southeast District, UFMCC

We are writing to respond to the letter recently circulated by you concerning the editorial content of the two last issues of *The Gay Christian* and *In Unity*. The issues raised in the articles you cite, we recognize, are the subject of on-going examination throughout our Fellowship as we seek to understand the origin, definition, and implications of sexism within our tradition. Your letter caused us deep distress, not from the fact that you took exception to some of the opinion expressed but rather with the suggestion that our church magazine, because of its general distribution, is not an appropriate forum in which to explore our issues.

Our Fellowship is a diverse and inclusive one, called into being not around doctrinal uniformity, but by our risen and living Lord, to serve a common ministry and mission. Because we have been gathered into MCC from different traditions and experiences, it is inevitable that we will encounter others whose interpretations and

understandings of orthodoxy will be at sharp variance with our own. That tension is our strength so long as we respect the fact that each of us has imperfect knowledge and imperfect prophecy and that we need to continue in dialogue with those differing from ourselves. For any group of clergy, no matter how well meaning, to determine that it must protect people from hearing the views and ideas of other clergy within our family, does serious damage to the very spirit of unity it purports to preserve.

Equally disturbing as your suggestion that only certain theological perspectives are permissible of expression in our common magazine is the notion that clergy need to shield lay people from ideas that may cause discomfort. Protecting the faithful was the same rationale used by religious leaders to condemn our Lord, and to persecute the early church. In UFMCC we have consistently affirmed the partnership in ministry between clergy and laity. Our lay people are as capable of examining their own faith understanding as are our clergy and occasionally more willing. If our lay people had not been free to examine "speculative theology" and "speculative ethics" they would still be saddled with the gay is sinful doctrine as the only truly Christian position.

As a church we must struggle together to understand ourselves and God's purpose for us with trust and courage. In Christ all things are made new. In Christ we are free to question any tradition without fear, knowing that God is faithful and will show us what is destructive and what is creative. Let us not fear each other but love one another, for perfect love casts out fear.

Your sisters and brothers in Christ of the Northeast District, meeting in conference May 20, 1979.

Sympathizing with Karen Ziegler's problems dealing with Genesis 1, it is hardly feasible to rip out the pages of the Bible and substitute one's own nicer version — "sacred stories, myths" or otherwise. Seeing the UFMCC regards the Bible as divinely inspired, "defusing or devaluating" Scripture is hardly a sensible method of dealing

with the problem — if, in actuality, there really is a problem.

Archaeological evidence does not prove that a goddess was worshipped before Yahweh or other sky gods, but that some cultures worshipped both male and female deities. However, gods, goddesses, etc., have no place in the Christian scheme of things and are totally irrelevant as arguments against Divine Revelation or its relationship to us as a Christian people. Theologically "Yahweh" is the only God, without beginning and without end, the "Prime Mover and Spirit of the Universe." Whether other cultures/religions worshipped a "mother" serpent or a top hat is totally immaterial to us as Christians. These other "gods" are nonexistent.

There are vague similarities between Genesis and Enuma Elish, but to describe them as "striking" is patently absurd. To credit God as being "afraid of Chaos" is pure nonsense. Chaos is not desirable for an evolving renewing Creation.

To dismiss Genesis as a mere Chauvinistic plot to discredit women is to twist the theme of things; God involved directly with Humanity; Humanity disobeyed and forfeited their right to walk closely with God, hence Humanity needed redemption. To argue over it and throw in a non-existent mother goddess is no more than crying over spilled milk.

Is Rev. Ziegler suggesting that we, as Christians, turn away from the God and Parent of our Lord Jesus Christ and worship some snake goddess or something? Is she advocating the Gnostic theme that Yahweh is a different God than that preached by Christ? It makes me wonder *who* is being worshipped by Rev. Ziegler.

Incidentally, Tertullian was a Montanist, not an Orthodox Christian, so quoting him was a waste of time as he doesn't hold the larger Christian view.

There is no way I can distribute this copy of *In Unity/The Gay Christian* to our regular visitors or Church groups; after claiming to be a "Christian Church moving in the mainstream of Christianity," we would be laughed out of town.

To print something like this in our international magazine was rather unwise. I am really sorry it appeared; if an archaeologist or student of primitive religions or ancient mythology sees it, our credibility

Letters CONTINUED

will be "zilch" honey. As we say back home. . . Balderdash!!!

Rev. Stan Harris
Baltimore, MD

■ First, let it be made clear that I write for myself only, and not as one who is on the Interim Board of Directors of Truth Chapel MCC, or as one who is Assistant District Coordinator for the Southwest District — Desert Sector.

Second, I strongly believe there is ample room for such articles as the above within the pages of *The Gay Christian — A Journal of Theological Reflection from Metropolitan Community Church* — whether I agree or disagree with the content. Let us not be guilty of suppressing what we do not agree with but instead let the pages of *TGC* continue to be an open expression of theological reflection within our Christian denomination. Please keep in mind that *TGC* is an open forum for thought, that the views expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the position of *The Gay Christian* or of the UFMCC. It is indeed a "sad day" to even suggest that the aforementioned articles are of "obvious controversial and perhaps even heretical content" as was mentioned in the May 10 letter. Sounds like something that would have been said in the Dark Ages.

Therefore, I urge you in the name of Jesus the Living Christ to open your hearts and minds and let *The Gay Christian* continue to be, within the pages of *In Unity* for all to read, an OPEN forum for thought — a journal of theological reflection.

Your brother in Christ,

Stephen D. Pfeiffer
Tucson, AZ

■ The furor over the Rev. Karen Ziegler's article in *The Gay Christian* is shocking. It reminds me of "Storm Center", an old Bette Davis film in which a librarian's life is shattered because she refuses to remove a controversial book from the library's shelves. I believe, as she did, that censorship, once begun, becomes a ravenous beast devouring all in its path.

Our Fellowship has always proclaimed individual freedom of conscience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. IT IS IN OUR BYLAWS. We affirm over and over the freedom in Christ we offer in UFMCC. We accuse other denominations of denying that freedom. We were alarmed when Father McNeill was silenced on the subject of homosexuality.

We are proud of our ecumenical nature. We rejoice in our freedom to disagree, sometimes widely, and to go on loving each other in community. Now there are some who demand that censorship be instituted, that one who disagrees with them should be silenced. The Rev. Ziegler, in good faith, has presented a controversial point of view and welcomed dialogue. An alarming number of my sisters and brothers have responded with the same kind of attitudes which had Nazis piling books on bonfires.

I suggest that a mature and constructive response would be to present the opposing viewpoint in as effective and scholarly a way as the Rev. Ziegler has presented hers. That would allow everyone information from both viewpoints to make a personal decision on the issues raised. I find that reading material with which I disagree, when it is responsibly written forces me to think more clearly about my own beliefs and makes me stronger.

Should we begin to govern our Fellowship with fear and narrowmindedness, we shall certainly have lost our prophetic calling. We shall no longer deserve to be called people of God. Take care. The standard we use to judge may be used to judge us.

Rev. Michael E. England
Minister of Christian Education
MCC San Francisco, CA

■ By majority vote of the clergy and delegates of the South Central District, this letter is to serve as formal protest by the District Conference to the article entitled "Creation Myths: Bridge to Human Wholeness," by the Rev. Karen Ziegler. There has been a groundswell of adverse opinion to

CONSCIOUSNESS RAZORS

BLACK MEN WITH HIGH SCHOOL
DIPLOMAS EARN LESS THAN WHITES
WITH 8th GRADE EDUCATION

THE AVERAGE FAMILY INCOME FOR
PUERTO RICANS IN NEW YORK CITY
IN 1970 WAS \$5,575; FOR WHITES
IT WAS \$10,378

FBI REPORTS SAY THAT 55% OF ALL
MURDER VICTIMS ARE BLACK

THE TEENAGE MALE AMERICAN
INDIAN HAS THE HIGHEST SUICIDE
RATE OF ANY SPECIES ON EARTH.

BEFORE WHITES CAME
TO THIS COUNTRY, THERE WAS
A ZERO SUICIDE RATE AMONG
AMERICAN INDIANS

WHEN LYNCHING WAS POPULAR IN
AMERICA, FINGERS OF BLACKS
WERE OFTEN DISPLAYED IN
BUTCHER SHOP WINDOWS.
BLACKS OFTEN HAD THEIR TEETH
PULLED, ONE AT A TIME, WHILE
THEY WERE STILL ALIVE
AND THEIR FINGERS AND TOES
AXED OFF BEFORE THEY WERE
LYNCHED.

TEN PERCENT OF ALL THIRD WORLD
PEOPLE ARE GAY

BLACK AND THIRD WORLD GAYS
ARE A VALUABLE AND NECESSARY
PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

a message from your Fellowship
Committee on Racism

this article which began with the lay people of this district. We believe that some important points have been raised, and that these points must be stated.

1) The header on the masthead of *The Gay Christian* states that the publication is 'A journal of theological reflection from Metropolitan Community Church'. Not until the last page of *TGC* does any sort of disclaimer appear. Which is correct? If the disclaimer is the true viewpoint of the publication, why is it not prominently displayed before such a controversial article?

2) Does this article correctly reflect the theological stance of UFMCC? If it does, why are we calling ourselves a Christian church? Are we Christ-centered, and do we uphold the Bible as the inspired word of God, or do we not? If the article does not correctly reflect our stance, why does it appear in *In Unity*?

3) While articles of this nature may be appropriate for in-depth theological discussion, is it appropriate for the broad-based outreach of *In Unity/The Gay Christian*? New people and fledgling Christians can be very threatened by the apparent contradictions to UFMCC's statement of faith contained in the article.

4) UFMCC is under constant surveillance by people who delight in attempting to question our theological credibility. Are we not providing them with tremendous ammunition by printing this article with UFMCC's stamp of approval?

Again we protest the fact that this article was included in our Fellowship publication and we await your response to our expression of concern.

For the South Central District
Conference,

Rev. Donald M. Eastman
District Coordinator

■ I'd like to make a simple analogy regarding the *TGC* controversy.

In recent years we've all been struggling against a homophobic campaign that calls our lifestyle "sinful", attacks any publication of our views as "advocating" them and justifies censorship as a righteous effort to "Save Our Children."

In our own Fellowship there is a similar campaign being waged, not over expres-

sions of unorthodox sexuality but unorthodox theology. Its banner reads, "Save Our Laypeople."

As a layperson, I don't appreciate laypeople being characterized as easily "confused" or used in this demeaning way to justify a Bryant-istic reaction to *The Gay Christian*.

Laypeople are not children. We are adults, as involved as any clergyperson should be in challenging assumptions and being challenged, opening hearts and being opened, breaking down walls and having our walls broken. We are not crying to be rescued from the big, bad ideas or the growth that results from struggling with them.

For clergy to assume, act, or encourage laypeople otherwise smacks of heresy.

Respectfully,

Jean Gralley, Chairperson
Committee on Lay Concerns

■ How can people who have defied centuries of Biblical interpretation and Christian tradition, and people who have known the pain of the denial of authentic inclusion within the Body of Christ be so adverse in their acceptance of legitimate Biblical scholarship? It was this type of scholarship that enabled us to fully claim our heritage as Christians in the first place.

We are a Fellowship with a radical premise. Have we forgotten where we have come from and what we are about? We are doing what many have told us is impossible. Yet two articles by the Rev. Jay Deacon and the Rev. Karen Ziegler, well within the mainstream of Christian thought, has caused one group of clergy to summarily censure another and has also caused a group of clergy to suggest that lay people and clergy alike should be protected from "obvious controversial and perhaps even heretical content."

The letter goes on to attack not the substance of what was said by either author, but rather general references to the kind of people who would dare to write such material. There are numerous references to speculative theology, to heretical content, to the personal agendas of the writers. These statements by the clergy are simply personal attacks that have never been justified or documented. Not once

has there been an attempt by these clergy people to undertake their own research that could refute or shed greater light on the subjects.

All the clergy letter illustrates is that when individuals are threatened by painful realities they generally attack the people they are uncomfortable with rather than dealing with the issue. Is the Church sexist or not? Is there irrefutable evidence to claim that Rev. Ziegler's article or Rev. Deacon's article is heretical or in any way disputes Biblical authority? I must have been reading different articles because I sure did not see any of that. In fact, those ideas contained in the articles were presented to us almost verbatim in our Old and New Testament classes our first year in Seminary by professors and by renowned scholars within Christian tradition. The ideas presented are not new ideas, they are ideas that have reached their time for implementation. I admire the work and research that went into those articles and pray continually that we will be able to maintain that high level of scholarship in our future efforts. We need it. The letter from the South East District Clergy can be seen in no other light than an attempt to suppress legitimate theological discussion.

This debate is not just a difference of opinion, it is a spiritual struggle. One of the things I have learned this last year is that the highest component of our spiritual quest is prayer. Prayer calls us to courage. Prayer calls us to move away from the safe place into the unknown, into new ideas, into new into new expressions of our lives together. Giving up the familiar and reaching out with open arms to God makes us vulnerable. It is natural to be threatened when one is in a state of transition. Yet vulnerable and open we must be. It is part of our call.

I am constantly reminded of the passage in the Gospel of John directed to Peter. After Peter has tried so valiantly to follow Christ, he feels a sense of failure. He has denied Christ not once but three times. Jesus has returned to Peter to ask three times, "Do you love me?" More important than the question Jesus is saying that if you do God's will, Peter, "I tell you most solemnly, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you

Letters CONTINUED

where you would rather not go." John 21:18

We are a people who have already dared just by being who we are. We are the new face of the Church. We must not be threatened by the continuing journey. We can not be daring on one front and reactionary on another. The face of the Church and of God is changing. We must also. Now is the time to stretch out our hands to God and to be led where we would rather not go. I pray that our inquiry continues and that it leads not to destruction but to a deepening and a strengthening of our faith and Fellowship.

Rev. Valerie Bouchard

■ One only has to read any newspaper to understand that we are living in apocalyptic times. It is crucial that we receive revelation lucidly and courageously. Our world is torn asunder with wars, famines, mass suicides and murder. Hunger is rampant, physically and spiritually. What we do with the visions that God has placed upon our hearts will determine, I believe, the salvation of humankind.

People must deal with the chains that destroy us. Wrapped up in this sexist issue is the key to freedom. Contained within the bondage of sexism is racism and classism, homophobia, and the rape and plunder of our earth. As Christians it is imperative that we be challengers of the system and not perpetrators of it.

Frankly, having read much of the op-

position to Karen's article, I am frightened. That kind of blatant appeal to censorship and stagnation of human creativity burned our women at stakes for years and years. And I remind you that it was our men who served as the fuel to ignite the fires that burned our women. The demand for censorship and the callous disregard for freedom and search is exactly what mutilated 250,000 of our people in the Nazi death camps. I fear that we endanger the vision God has given us. I am afraid that popular opinion gets in the way of working for the fulfillment of God's eternal world within us all.

As crucial as the sexism issue is the implication that our lay people haven't enough faith or understanding to read controversial and diverse theological opinions and observations. Imagine a preacher making that judgment for her/his people: "No, no, children, you mustn't read that. It will hurt you. It is not good for you. It might shake your faith!" I really question the foundation of anyone's faith who cannot explore thoughts different than their own without fear that their faith will crumble. I also have serious problems with any preacher who fears having to struggle with these kinds of issues with their people.

I find it ironic that most critics seem to have overlooked the fact that Karen was searching for a bridge to human wholeness. I would point out that Judaism was a bridge to Christianity. I suspect that Christianity was/is a bridge to somewhere else. I trust God in that. Loving God has to do with challenge. Being people of God demands

that we go where no one has ever gone before. It is bizarre and ludicrous to me that we persist in holding onto idols which have sought, since the beginning, to destroy us.

I guess it grows more and more difficult for me to understand what people are afraid of. In light of our faith one would think that our courage would astonish and enlighten the world. But we hold onto the "pigs in our head." The reluctance of our people to deal openly, honestly, lovingly, and hopefully with painful and controversial issues must come to an end. We are one of two things: a prophetic people fulfilling a mission of God, or simply another fundamentalistic little church group judging, condemning, and oppressing people in the name of Christ.

I pray for our growth, our enlightenment, our salvation. I believe that our mission is no small or trivial matter. I deeply believe the future of humanity lies within the framework of our movement, this church. I believe that God intended this Universal Fellowship to be a bridge for and to human wholeness. I entreat you all to join voices in a song of prayer and hope. We are a new creation. God expects us to be warriors of truth. God expects us to risk crucifixion, to be unpopular. How can one ever tell the truth and be popular? I deeply believe that the way we meet and deal with the sexist and racist issues confronting us today will determine the shape and direction not only of our lives and churches, but our world.

I acknowledge the need for loving battle. I recognize the importance of being gentle and sensitive even though many of those opposed to our struggle are not. However, it is time to cease with silence. I call to your attention the theme of our General Conference: "For such a time as this . . ." How would the course of human his/herstory been altered if Esther had been silent, if she had not heeded the very word of God?

Rev. Shelley Hamilton

■ I am writing to encourage the publication of more articles like Karen Ziegler's "Creation Myths: Bridge to Human Wholeness", which appeared in *TGC*. Rev. Ziegler's essay appeared to be well-researched and gave me a new perspective on God and our cultural roots.

Terry E. Laun

A NEW WORD THAT WORKS!



In Unity/The Gay Christian is now available on cassette tapes, beginning with the April/May 1979 issue!

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THE GAY CHRISTIAN

A journal of
theological
reflection
from Metropolitan
Community Church

Karen Ziegler Responds:

Oddly enough, I did not anticipate that my article *Creation Myths: Bridge to Human Wholeness* would generate such an overwhelming response. I simply wanted to share this paper, which I wrote for Union last year as a routine course assignment. I was proud of the way it turned out and encouraged by the positive response of my professor. I did not even edit it for publication. It amuses me now how innocently I walked into the controversial position in which I now find myself. An adequate re-

sponse to the many letters I have received would take up far more space than we have here. I hope to talk to many of you at General Conference.

In the meantime, I want to say that the Holy Spirit, I am sure, is working through all of this. It causes me pain to be called a "pagan" and a "heretic", but I am very glad that we are finally at a point in this Fellowship that we can deal openly with our extreme theological diversity. We are *one body*, called by God to a common task. The more we know about each other, the more openly we dialogue with each other in honesty, the stronger we will become in our faith and in our loyalty to one another.

I want those people who are frightened by my article to know me. I want them to understand that when I began to understand that I am a lesbian, and that this is inextricably connected to my particular journey as a Christian, many things were thrown into question for me. I began to see that heterosexism and racism and sexism are all connected. I also began reluctantly to reach the conclusion that the church has been largely responsible for perpetrating all three. And I knew that this Fellowship has been called to an awesome task. We have been called to articulate our faith in a way that is liberating to the world. Given the history of the church, and the inherently oppressive presuppositions contained in its doctrine from its earliest beginnings, we begin to see that in us, God is doing a new thing. Given the precarious state of the planet at this time in history, we begin to see how much the world needs to hear what we have to say. In the face of this kind of urgent responsibility, it makes no sense at all to refuse to hear each other.

We can no longer afford the kind of religious bigotry which allows us to think there is some easy kind of distinction between "pagans" and "Christians". What do we mean by "pagan" anyway? Do we mean the quiet gentle worshippers of the Earth Mother who lived in Canaan until the Is-

raelites arrived in the "promised land" and murdered and raped them? Do we mean the American Indians who lived in harmony with their God until the European Christians arrived in this country and slaughtered them? Do we mean those Africans who were sold into slavery by Christians? Do we mean those millions of women who were burned at the stake by the Church during the Middle Ages? Or the gay men ("faggots", remember?) who served as fuel for those flames? All of these people were called "pagan". Yet again and again in the Bible we find that God is on the side of the despised ones. God hates injustice and rape and murder.

Our own people have been murdered and raped and burned at the stake and sold into slavery. This ought to have taught us something. We all know what it is to be hated and feared because of who we are. We have survived these things because we knew, all tangible evidence to the contrary, that we walk with God. We have been raised up, as a body of Christ, to speak the Good News of God's love for all people. It seems to me that an understanding of this makes it impossible to be proud or uncritical of the history of the church. It seems to me that an understanding of the nature of our oppression as lesbians and gay men should make us at least a little wary of making the same devastating blunders. Are we going to end up being one more institution which oppresses people in the name of Christ? Are we going to silence or burn at the stake those among us who frighten us? I for one have been feeling the flames recently.

I feel deeply betrayed by those of my brothers and sisters who question my Christianity. I can only say that I would not be a minister in this Fellowship if I did not know that God has called me to be here. I could not survive the daily frustrations and pressures of pastoring a church were I not strongly motivated by the love of Christ. I believe so passionately that

God has called us to be a prophetic people. This is painful and difficult. Being the people of God at this time in history cannot be otherwise. Our diversity is our strength; let us take care to preserve it. It is only thus that we can begin to understand the radicality of the gospel we preach. It is indeed good news.

Rev. Karen Ziegler, Pastor
MCC New York, NY

The Editor Responds:

The *Gay Christian* does not apologise for publishing Karen Ziegler's article, *Genesis Creation Myths: Bridge to Human Wholeness*. The *Gay Christian* does not intend to join up with heresy-hunting, book-burning (or magazine not-selling) and does not buy the argument that any significant departure from orthodox/patriarchal machine-theology constitutes a surrender of credibility, or of Christian faith.

Here is the issue:

Please check which statement(s), below, is (are) canonical, or orthodox, or sound doctrine, or whatever you like to call things you basically agree with and choose to affirm:

- ☐ "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor."
- ☐ "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
- ☐ "Let deacons be the husband of one wife, and let them manage their children and their households well."
- ☐ "All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."
- ☐ "The angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept in eternal chains in nether gloom until the

judgment of the great day; just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire."

- ☐ "Love is of God, and the one who loves is born of God and knows God, for God is love."

Which of the six quotes, all right out of the official-apostolic-orthodox-canonical New Testament, did you check? (In order, 1 Tim 2:11-14, Gal 3:28, 1 Tim 3:12, Gal 3:10f, Jude 6-7, 1 John 4:7f.)

All of them, necessarily, if you're going to stand by the arguments of the Southeast District clergy, the South Central District, and the Rev. Harris. Now, of course, we can hardly continue our dialogue with those folks until they've done the following. They must immediately dismiss any deacon who doesn't fulfill the specifications of 1 Tim 3:8-13. The UFMCC's bylaws specifically cite 1 Tim 3:8-13 as requirements for deacons, and it's what the Bible says, anyway. They have to. For anyone to impugn anything we've printed in *The Gay Christian* on the basis of biblicism or bylaws, while retaining deacons not married to one wife (and that excludes women altogether!) is a profound insult to our integrity and intelligence. Cut it out.

It takes a modernday biblicist/literalist to get into this terrible pickle. The ancient Jews, you know, understood the Bible — their Torah — as story. The concept of literalism would not have occurred to them. What is hard for those critics not to realize is that we, by being less biblicist than they, are being more biblical. They just don't know how to read an ancient book that wasn't written as an owner's manual on how to run your life. It's story. Lots of stories. Different stories. Some, I suppose you could say, conflicting.

So when the rabbis read the two conflicting Creation stories in Genesis 1-3, they solved the problem the way they always did: they wrote another story — in this case, the Midrash about Lilith. Adam must have had two wives, they reasoned — Eve and Lilith.

The New Testament can be understood as sort of a series of midrash on the Torah in the light of a new movement of the Spirit in human history. The New Testament misquotes the Old — intentionally, freely, unworried about technicalities.

The biblical writings were selectively canonized during the second through the fourth centuries. Probably the most important criterion: that they be authored

by apostles. Sorry, folks. Modern research has discredited the faction of apostolic authorship for most New Testament books, including the Gospels.

But apostolic authority is pretty basic to our problem. Neither this editor's faith, nor that of the article's author, depends on it. God is God; absolutizing anything less is idolatry. The biblical writers are witnesses, telling their story. Their witness is finite and fallible. And there have always been other witnesses. It is chauvinistic and tacky to dismiss the testimonies and stories of others about their experience of God out of hand, or to equate somebody else's way of talking about God with worshipping a top hat, as Harris does.

But "apostolic authority" is the basis for dismissing all other witnesses, even Tertullian, of whom Harris says, "Tertullian was a Montanist, not an Orthodox Christian, so quoting him was a waste of time as he doesn't hold the larger Christian view." Montanists questioned the "apostolic" theological machine's iron grip on what Christians could or could not affirm. Montanists, unlike "Orthodox Christians", promoted women to positions of leadership. "Apostolic authority" and its orthodoxy required the murder of up to two million women as witches, on the other hand.

"Apostolic authority" wants us to ratify every decision the (apostolic) Church has made, including the selection of the Canon, and the suppression and destruction of other witnesses, written and human. "Apostolic authority" gave us the Inquisition. But we can no longer afford to suppress other voices. God stands beyond all of them, and is greater than all of them, canonical or not. We must learn to discern hints and shadows of truth about God wherever we find them.

"Apostolic" does not, of course, exactly refer to the Apostles. I do not debunk the Jerusalem church leaders, though Paul questions their authority and their integrity in Galatians and 2 Corinthians. But the word really refers to the power of the institutional Church as it attempted to appeal to the authority of the Apostles to secure its position against other voices. You cannot invoke the word "heresy" without reference, explicit or implicit, to this phenomenon.

But this is the most important thing: People of faith, people hungering to know God, people who seek to follow that radical iconoclastic prophet Jesus, have to learn to take their own experience of God and of life seriously. That is the lesson for Gays and Women struggling for authenti-

city, truth, and a faith that makes sense to them, makes sense of them.

The Apostolic Institutional Church has not made room for *our* experience, *our* truth. It is because of their near-deification of the Bible, or orthodoxy, of their apostolic-traditional way of reading Christian history. The orthodox preservers of machine-religion hung that radic-lib rabbi from Nazareth. They're still at it. Shall we have a heresy trial?

We do hope the reader can observe the conflict in what the letter from the Southeast District clergy says:

*persons with ambivalence or ambiguity
share their faith strivings and
struggles with us.*

*releasing radical opinions that are mostly
the personal agenda of some writers.*

Both lines occur in the same letter, and they're both the same thing, put differently. Guess how you put it depends on whether you value such sharing or fear its implications. If you fear its implications, it is no surprise if you don't understand what a theological journal is about. You know all too well what most churches are about. The rub is that UFMCC can't afford to be like that. Theological exploration is not welcome everywhere. There are churches that are more interested in orthodoxy and having a smooth-running institution free of conflict than in truth, or in creative conflict that leads to greater self-understanding. In the churches of my former affiliation, somebody's pretentious orthodoxy forced us all into inauthentic attempts at seeming to be what we were not.

And what is the meaning of the thrice-used shibboleth, "speculative theology"? What is this about "officially releasing" things? We are publishing a journal of theological reflection and exploration. Will you tell us what theology *isn't* speculative? Barth? Calvin? Augustine or Aquinas? Billy Graham? Hal Lindsey? Luke when he disagrees with Matthew? John when he disagrees with the bunch of them?

Or how about the expression "unity", used where perhaps the Southeast clergy might have used "institutional calm". That's what most churches mean by "unity". It is exalted above genuine openness and the principle of pluralism. That is the way Mayor Daley ran Chicago. In such a church, there isn't any room for any of us.

A few specific points require comment. I asked our local authority on the current critique of sexism in theology about Karen Ziegler's arguments in the "Creation Myths". The authority, Dr. Rosemary Ra-

ford Ruether, is author of *New Woman/New Earth, From Machismo to Mutuality*, and edited *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Religious Traditions*. She is likely the most respected authority on the subject anywhere (she is Georgia Harkness professor of theology at Garrett Evangelical Divinity School in suburban Chicago).

Ruether critiques the Merlin Stone book used as a major source in the Ziegler article, as the work not of a scholar, but of a journalist. Stone's footnote documentation is vague and imprecise. But, says Ruether, Stone is onto something important, and a scholar of stature should follow her leads and sources and produce a more substantial work on the subject. Ruether has worked with the same primary sources (the ancient texts cited by the author), and they have led her to similar conclusions, confirming, in the main, Karen Ziegler's argument.

It may be too much for Stone to assert 25,000 years of very ancient matriarchal/matrilinear society. You can't prove it by the archaeological evidence. The mythological evidence, however, is overwhelming. This suggests to Ruether that always, at the margins of human consciousness and unconscious, there has existed the female/feminine half of the psychic equation, expressed powerfully in symbol, myth, and ancient religion, if not quite in concrete worldly power structures.

Ziegler assumes a corruption of the text of Enuma Elish, in which previously female figures are turned to masculine ones. According to Ruether, such layering is very possible, but at the distance of a millenia of time, it is no longer possible to untangle the puzzle to determine such strata of development. Ruether strongly supports Ziegler's thesis of significant relationship between the Babylonian and Hebrew texts and her assessment of its meaning.

Ruether's chief critique of the biblical narrative is its constant theme of dualist domination. Instead of ecological balance and fellow-feeling with nature, Yahweh and Yahweh's men will dominate nature, which is cast in a "feminine" role. Thus, Yahweh and his ruling class of humans are male. He (man) dominates the earth (she). Sometimes we expose our real knowledge of this power arrangement when we speak of the male-dominated power structure as "raping" the earth and nature, bot of which we refer to as "she". Male is set over female from the very beginning in a relationship of domination/submission. That schema must ultimately destroy itself, says Ruether. Today, dominated "Mother

Earth/Mother Nature" nears ecological collapse. What the hell, says the patriarchy, busily constructing another nuclear reactor — patriarchy assumes its right to dominate.

Enuma Elish, the Babylonian text, illustrates the rise of patriarchy in mythical picture-story language. In Genesis, the domination is already complete. And in history, the domination of nature is both *accompanied by* and *accomplished by means of* the oppression and labor of the dominated classes of human beings. The male ruling class is symbolized by sexual myths. The "Head" is the male, the "Body" female. So the Medieval Church equates intelligence with men and passion with women.

We ought to be sterner critics of the Church that has never really had a place for gays, women, and others it has chosen to call "heretics" — and since the sixth century, the Church has equated "heresy" with "homosexuality", both punishable by death. They were the same. Have we forgotten?

It is time to declare the word "heresy" an obscenity.

It is time, in the best biblical/prophetic tradition, to embrace the past critically, to trust our evolving experience, to cherish our truth, to accept God's call upon our lives as Exodus.

And, we promise you, we will not be silenced.

Rev. F. Jay Deacon
Editor, TGC

THE GAY CHRISTIAN

is a journal of theological reflection for the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Because it is an open forum for thought, the views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the position of TGC or of the Fellowship. Also, the appearance of a name in this magazine does not denote sexual orientation. Articles and comments are encouraged and should be addressed to the Editor:

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Box 2392
Chicago, Illinois 60690

KEVIN

Kevin died tonight.
Not a heroic death on a field of honor,
Not from some exotic disease,
Not even from the mechanized man-
slaughter of the nation's highways.
Kevin died because he just got too tired,
Too frustrated,
Too lonely to go on living.
He gave up.
And so tonight after the evening meal,
After returning to his dreary prison cell,
Kevin took a rope he made
from an old dirty bedsheet,
And he hanged himself.
It took only a moment.
And now, Kevin's worldly existence
of barely twenty years
Has come to a silent
Irreversible
End.

—Phillip C., Arizona State Prison

— Help Us Reach Out —
a message from your UFMCC Board
of Institutional Ministry

MILLER cont'd from 15 show that the Bible did not in truth condemn homosexuality but it seemed only a game to justify what I already knew. People said that God was the Father only and I knew God was also Mother and there is neither male nor female in the risen Christ, and yet all the words seemed so useless. I saw people excluded from realizing their spirituality, especially homosexuals, and more especially lesbians. Yet, somehow, lesbians have survived, relying totally on *their* awareness of the Reality, despite other people's words, and carry on in faith. There can be a no more hopeful sign for the survival of spiritual Reality in our lives than a Christian lesbian.

The established Church continues to get caught up in its words and structures, credentials, and roles, yet homosexuals continue to strive to bring the Reality of Jesus Christ and the Church to people, gay and straight. The Universalist Unitarian Association (UUA) seems to come the nearest to supporting homosexuality as a lifestyle. It has established an Office of

Gay Concerns, constructed an excellent human sexuality unit within its educational materials which includes a very up-front discussion of homosexuality. Overall, UUA churches seem to be more receptive to gay persons using their facilities for worship and gatherings, and certainly respond least homophobically of any of the established churches.

The United Church of Christ (UCC), the Presbyterians, Lutherans, and the United Methodist Church (UMC) all have gay caucuses struggling for the recognition, embracing, and acceptance of homosexuals in their respective congregations. The gay Baptists keep trying to form a gay group or caucus, but are currently without funds or staff. Baptist denominations remain totally nonreceptive. The UCC has a woman coordinator of their gay caucus and she estimates a 20 percent lesbian membership. The UCC is concentrating on educating its people and seeking civil rights for homosexuals. They are the first church to have ordained a self-proclaimed homosexual. The Presbyterians are focusing on the study of homosexuality. Their gay caucus is struggling for mere recognition and it is still a highly homophobic church. Lutherans Concerned for Gays is very low key in profile, deliberately not taking a political stance. Their preference is to work toward dialogue and better understanding. There are a growing number of local chapters, some of which do meet regularly for worship. They have an estimated 17 percent female membership.

The United Methodists have taken the stance "we love you but . . ." The UMC supports civil rights but sees the homosexual lifestyle as incompatible with Christianity. The UMC Gay Caucus has taken a more activist stance than some, partly because of the opportunities afforded by the structure of the UMC. The movement for lesbians in the UMC is happening within the women's caucus, most particularly in the local Task Forces on the Role and Status of Women. Many lesbians are found working within these groups, but not openly. Therefore, the UMC Gay Caucus is primarily male, and the much needed insight and talent of the lesbians are closeted within the feminist movement in the UMC. At least the women are making some headway, in that more and more women are in leadership positions, not to mention their increased numbers in seminars. The UMC is still basically a very homophobic church.



The Episcopal Church is suffering considerable turmoil over women and the church, not to mention homosexuals and the church. A group known as Integrity has arisen to work with Episcopal gay persons. It was one of the first gay groups to obtain support from a noted theologian, Norman Pittenger. Integrity emphasizes the provision of a support group for religious gay persons and seeks further education and dialogue within the church at large. Although Integrity has gained considerable recognition, the Episcopal Church's stance at present is that homosexuals should be loved as Children of God and given equal rights, but ordination involves issues that need further study. As the Episcopal Church is very sexist, it is no surprise that the percentage of women in Integrity at best is only 10 percent. In January 1977 Bishop Paul Moore of the New York Diocese ordained the first open lesbian to the priesthood, but this represents the exception and not the rule. There are approximately twenty-five local chapters of Integrity, primarily in the more major cities, most of which meet regularly for the Eucharist.

Perhaps the largest gay religious group outside of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) is the gay Catholic organization known as Dignity. Dignity has been in existence approximately eight years with currently nearly fifty chapters all over the nation, not including affiliated organizations worldwide. This group stresses education, spiritual development, social involvement, and social events. Its membership comprises up to 25 percent lesbians, decidedly below the norm, but considering the sexist nature of the Roman Catholic Church, not a bad percentage. Dignity too has been supported by the writing of a priest/theologian, Father John McNeill. His most recent work, *The Church and the Homosexual*, is used by gay religious persons across faith and denominational lines.

Gay Jewish groups have also been forming, mostly on either coast in more than a half-dozen cities, not to mention several abroad. This religious group more than any other suffers from centuries of entrenched patriarchic male roles. It is an immense step simply for a group of gay Jewish males to gather. Obviously, however, lesbians are not often found, nor are they actively sought.

All these gay religious groups must fight for mere recognition, much less acceptance. They are so involved with obtaining recognition that cont'd pg 30

We Are Many, Reconciled

LAY PAGE

There has never been a time in this Fellowship when we have been more conscious of our differences. It has been a decade since 12 people first met in Los Angeles as a church open to all people. Maybe its taken ten years of growing and hearing each other to understand what it *means* to be open, to be ecumenical. Did the men really know what it was to be in the same body with feminist women? Did the feminists know what it was to be side-by-side with hardcore traditionalists? Did the traditionalists have any idea they would be in a body with vocal blacks and hispanics and that there would be a "cutting edge" that would cut to the heart? Did the cutting edge know that members of this body, as elsewhere, would try to dull them? Did we all fully realize the scope of this grand experiment that ties north to south and east to west and says the center is strong enough to hold us together? Men, women, fundamentalists, liberals, feminists, paternalists, old school, new wave and mainstream are all beginning to hear each other and realize, perhaps for the first time, and with much apprehension, that all of us are here. In the wake of that realization, the center is harder to find.

Why is this a subject for a page devoted to lay issues rather than "theology" sections? Because this is, at the heart, a people issue.

We usually make a mistake in believing ecumenism is a subject for the pulpit, because it is most often visible in the struggles between ministers. We find ourselves shuffling to one side or the other as cheering sections for one or more Defenders of the Faith. But the direction of our attention is wrong. Ecumenism is a simple human bridge we make to *each other*, far above theological thunderstorms; it's the truth of the sameness of our questions, far above the clashing of our temporary answers. Some would rather keep ecumenism, our reconciliation, an elite issue, looking down on laypeople as too theologically ignorant to understand the current debate. We folks don't recognize a heretic when we see one, don't know enough to be offended at improper ideas or see clearly that line that divides the doctrinal brahmas from the doctrinal lepers. But this isn't ignorance; it's grace.

Theological logistics are only a disguise for a simple disharmony we laypeople commonly experience in our own local churches. We as a people, as churches, and as a Fellowship most often do not hurt because of ideas, but because we fear not belonging to each other. Over two long years and many thousands of miles, we've struggled apart from each other. Our Statement of Faith, broad as it is, has been our "tie that binds", an important joining place for our conglomeration of mostly-poor, mostly-struggling church bodies. We can bellow out a disapproval unbecoming an ecumenical fellowship when one sector manifests the Statement of Faith radically differently from ourselves because our first fear, as we struggle to simply exist, is that the fabric of the Fellowship will tear. When we are so insecure, it is really difficult to realize that that fabric is not made of our favorite material in our favorite color but is a crazy quilt, a living cloth. What makes our Statement one of *living faith* will vary with each of us. That Statement is a strong-box that each of us will fill with our own graced consciousness. We will not fill it in the same ways. This is what it means to have the freedom to be ecumenical, to be different from each other, and still belong to each other.

It is much harder to be ecumenical than it is to be gay and Christian. We know God loves us regardless of our sexuality; do we know God loves us regardless of our differences of perspective? Confronted with them, we play back tapes from our old churches, warnings about attitudes we see in others, be they conservative or liberal. But who of us has come from an ecumenical church? When we draw only on our past to judge each other, we can only condemn each other. There has been no ecumenical institution like ours before us. The one message we share from our diverse church backgrounds is that the differences in faiths other than our own are suspect; that our own has triumphed over the pitfalls of others. This is the legacy of divided Christianity.

But in all churches at all times, the people have been a living symbol of the power of God to bring diversity into unity. The hallmark of the early Church, a lay church, was its diversity. Its people were Jew and Greek,

male and female, rich and poor, the most varied and radical assortment possible at that time. They took the pineapple as their symbol — a global body made of many separate facets bound together as one whole. This has always been the real gift of the church; without insisting that the Greek become Jew or the Jew become Greek, Greek and Jew are reconciled to each other.

The miracle of our ecumenism is still in our people. More often than not our laity finds our differences, even extreme differences, interesting and enlightening, things to be shared. And we have many differences to share. As the Committee on Lay Concerns compiles its recent survey, we are amazed at the variety of our backgrounds. Like the early church, we are from every mindset and class and church and we co-exist as a family. Not because we are ignorant about theology, but because it is easy for us to not mistake theology for living faith. That faith lives in our relationship to each other. We belong to each other.

All the theological jockeying in the world cannot bring about this belonging. This puts the cart before the horse. We cannot sweat and cut and paste bits of doctrine from here and bits of speculation from there and come up with a magic formula that will make us all happy and united. Instead, our reconciliation is a matter of human contact and grace. It is feeling and recognizing the center that *already holds us together*, rather than trying to construct one. The heart of ecumenism, our reconciliation, is not doctrine but spirit.

In a way that isn't easy to understand, we are already reconciled. Although one's mental gymnastics may be another's living faith, we are in this body together. Realizations of our many differences may actually be a catalyst for a great holy union this year, a reaching out to each other fully realizing the ways we are not the same and submitting to each other so that we can *learn* from our differences. A holy union in which we openly acknowledge the center is our love for each other, just as we are. And be it for better and worse times, for richer and poorer, kicking and screaming in sickness and in health, alleluia, this body lives.

Jean Gralley is chair of Lay Concerns.

Christian Voice Attacks— Gay Christians Respond

Christian Voice

seeks to awaken the
"sleeping giant" of
American politics --
50 million conservative
Christians....

It has already attacked
UFMCC's Office in
Washington, D.C.

**R. Adam
De Baugh**

A group calling itself Christian Voice has launched a new Christian lobby in Washington. They have taken offices just a few blocks from the UFMCC Washington Field Office, and have hired Gary Jarmin of the American Conservative Union as their legislative consultant.

Christian Voice is a public interest lobby, which was formed as an outreach of the American Christian Cause, a tax deductible organization. It was created largely so that the Christian Cause people could engage in massive amounts of lobbying and can endorse and work for political candidates. In a letter to "carefully selected Members of Congress" recently, Dr. Robert Grant, the president of American Christian Cause, the parent group of Christian Voice, listed 11 members of Congress who had already joined the Christian Voice Congressional Advisory Committee. They are Senators Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT), Gordon J. Humphrey (R-NH) and Roger Jepsen (R-IA), and Representatives Dan Crane (R-IL), Robert K. Dornan (R-CA), George Hansen (R-ID), Tom Kindness (R-OH), Trent Lott (R-MS), Larry McDonald (D-GA, and author of the anti-gay McDonald amendment), Ron Paul (R-TX), and Floyd Spence (R-SC).

Sen. Gordon Humphrey, the conservative protege of New Hampshire ex-governor Meldrim Thomson who unexpectedly defeated incumbent Democratic Senator Thomas McIntyre last November, wrote some Members of Congress: "I am very excited about this new organization which will serve as a catalyst for organizing the Christian community into political action. In terms of broadening the conservative base, I can think of nothing more important than to organize millions of American Christians and provide a voice for them in our nation's capital . . . I am certain it [Christian Voice] will bring to the conservative cause a successful and influential ally."

The goal of the new lobbying group, according to information circulated to the most conservative members of Congress, is to organize Christians, especially evangelical Christians, behind conservative political causes. The Christian community "numbers at least 75,000,000," Christian Voice says, and "the 50,000,000 self-proclaimed 'evangelical' Christians alone represent 'the sleeping giant of American politics.'"

The concerns Christian Voice will address include "the increasing diminishment of Christian values, the sanctity of human life, the family structure, parental authority and most certainly morality in government. Of specific interest are abortion, pornography, child abuse, busing, prayer in schools, gay rights, the death penalty; as well as the broader issues concerning most Americans, taxation, inflation, big government, national defense and the threat of Communist expansionism."

There are some things in that laundry list of issues on which most of us will probably agree with Christian Voice. But the over-riding emphasis of this organization is directly in contradiction to the quest for justice that we in MCC, as Christians, support.



They Want To Throw The Book At Us

Christian Voice says it is "expanding its current base of 100,000 to a projected 250,000 — 1,000,000 by January 1980. This support base will be able to generate 100,000 — 250,000 postcards and letters on any given issue. In 1979 Christian Voice has budgeted \$1,000,000 to stimulate grass roots support of priority legislation."

The Media

Christian Voice accuses the Gay community of controlling the media, but they boast, "Your donations helped place television spots on the following major shows during the critical November campaign in California [Proposition 6 — the Briggs' Initiative]: A.M. America, Mike Douglas Show, Today, Emergency 1, Six Million Dollar Man, Evening News Report, NCAA Football, Bonanza, Walt Disney, Star Trek, Planet of the Apes (movie), The Sting (movie), MASH (movie)."

They say further, "the Christian television audience is currently estimated to be at least 30,000,000. Christian Voice enjoys immediate access to this vast constituency through existing Christian television networks and programs. Christian Voice will also reach this audience through daily two-minute spots and weekly half-hour commentaries adjacent to normally scheduled religious programs. Each spot or commentary motivates the viewer to take immediate action in regard to current legislation. Additionally, the Christian Voice will keep

the media informed of its activities and heighten the media's awareness of Christian issues and concerns."

Christian Voice on Gay Rights

Where do they stand on Gay rights? The American Christian Cause pamphlet says, "Perhaps the most publicized and visible moral issue in America at this moment is the 'gay rights' movement. Fifteen years ago, homosexuality was a little discussed perversion — and no one questioned that it was, indeed, a perversion. Now newspapers are full of the 'fight for rights' being waged by the 'gay' (a pathetic misnomer if there ever was one) community. The goals, plans, and real influence of organized homosexuals is frightening. Constant media exposure is brainwashing much of the public into believing that perhaps the 'alternate life style' (already being taught in many schools along with sex education courses) is just another acceptable way for humans to behave sexually. And while Americans are being called upon to 'rethink' the issue, they are also being asked to pass laws of the land to sanction and legitimize it. It's already happened in California and Seattle where the organized homosexuals spent over a million and a half dollars to win the votes in their favor."

They also boast that, "during the Fall elections, Christian Voice ran prime time spots and a 30-minute special in California on behalf of a statewide initiative to restrict gay leaders in

public schools from promoting homosexual attitudes to students."

California readers will be interested to know that American Christian Cause lists as a Special Consultant homophobic former Police Chief of Los Angeles, Ed Davis. They say Davis "is known for his unrelenting battle against the encroachments of pornography and violent crime on our national morality and safety."

Women's Issues

Christian Cause has this to say about women's rights: "Masquerading in the guise of 'equal rights for women' the women's liberation movement in this country has done more to threaten the family unit and undermine the security of future generations than any single issue of our decade. Resolutions passed by the International Women's Year Conference in Houston (Nov. 1977) endorse such principles as abortion on demand, state facilities to rear all children, lesbian 'rights' and the right of homosexuals to adopt children. While we agree that women deserve 'equal pay for equal work', we also know that the leaders of the IWY in Houston (now in a position of heavy influence and power) are, in fact, a small minority of militant lesbians, claiming to represent all women. They have captured control of the women's movement and are bent on destroying the traditional American family unit. American Christian Cause seeks to inform Americans that the Equal Rights Amendment as it stands written, is perhaps the most dangerous Constitutional Amendment ever proposed."

Christian Voice Attacks UFMCC Washington Field Office

Christian Voice has singled out the UFMCC Washington Office for attack. In their newsletter, *The Christian Voice*, they reprinted an 8½ by 7 inch ad for the UFMCC Washington Office and had this to say about it: "Here's what the Gays are doing. Below is an ACTUAL SIZE REPRODUCTION of the fundraising, membership advertisement the 'gay liberation' movement is publishing in major newspapers and journals across America. The cost of this type of advertising is enor-

“I am rushing you this urgent letter because the children in your neighborhood are in danger. *

mous, averaging several hundred dollars in major metropolitan newspapers for one day. But the resultant response has enabled the homosexuals to build a multi-million-dollar war chest. Funds from this war chest won the victories in Seattle and California, and enabled the gays to open their Washington, D.C. lobbying office."

The Christian Voice article goes on to quote, without giving credit, directly from our pamphlet about the office, *Proclaim Liberation in the Land*, saying the office "is located in the United Methodist Building, across the street from the U.S. Capitol, and flanked by the Supreme Court Building and the Senate Office Building. Two blocks from the Library of Congress and three blocks from the House of Representatives Office Buildings, it is right at the top of Capitol Hill.

"The Washington Office publishes *Gays On The Hill* [now called, *A New Day*]," Christian Voice reports, "a periodic newsletter on gay civil rights efforts in Washington and around the country. GOTH is a journal which reports on the progress of the gay civil rights bills in the Congress, the positions of Members of Congress and Presidential candidates on gay issues, and civil rights legislation on the state and local levels. It has published articles on writing to Congress and other tips on dealing with government."

Unfortunately, the only parts of this article that are accurate are the parts they lift from our own publications. Where do we begin to catalogue the lies these "Christians" have tried to spread?

“How would you feel if tomorrow your child . . . was taught by a practicing homosexual?”

First of all, there are a few distortions and misrepresentations. UFMCC's Washington Office is not the "office of the gay liberation movement." It is the office of the UFMCC, a Christian church that has among its ministries a ministry to Gay people.

Secondly, they don't even mention the Gay Rights National Lobby. Since Steven Endean started as the first GRNL lobbyist last fall, UFMCC has taken a decidedly secondary role in the lobbying effort in Congress. That is GRNL's prime responsibility and Steve is doing a fine job at it. We continue to help in any way we can, but our mandate for Christian witness in the nation's capital involves more than lobbying Congress. Apparently Christian Voice hadn't yet heard about Steve Endean and GRNL's excellent work. But we know they will.

But the outright lies come in when they talk about the ad. That ad, if you believe them, has appeared in "major metropolitan newspapers" all over the country at a cost of "several hundred dollars" each and reaping a "multi-million-dollar war chest." In fact, the ad in question has appeared twice, both times in *The Advocate*, a major Gay newspaper, to be sure, but not exactly a "major metropolitan newspaper."

The cost of the two ads, which appeared in two November, 1978 issues of *The Advocate*, was paid for as a gift to the office by a contributor. We paid nothing for the ads.

The "resultant response" Christian Voice talks about was not a "multi-million-dollar war chest." We received a total of \$301 that we could identify as being in response to the ad, not good even by Advocate standards, much less Christian Voice's.

Since the ads appeared in November, after the Seattle and California elections, it is clear also that we did not use money resulting from them in those elections. And the Christian Voice implies that the resultant response to the ads allowed us to set up this office, when in fact the office has been in existence since the fall of 1975.

* All quotes are from *Christian Voice* literature.

The lies and half-truths of the Christian Voice are bad enough, but they are accompanied by a suspicious omission. On the coupon in the original ad appeared the address of the office, right next to the MCC cross with its Chi-Rho and Alpha and Omega. In the Christian Voice's reproduction of the ad the address is missing. Perhaps they are afraid some of their closeted supporters would send us some money on the sly!

I wish we could say we had a "multi-million-dollar war chest" to fight lies and bigotry and hate. I wish we could afford to run ads in "major metropolitan newspapers" across America. I wish we could spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ further and further, a Gospel of love and acceptance and freedom. I wish our work with the Congress, in cooperation with the Gay Rights National Lobby, and our work with the religious denominations' offices in Washington and the Gay caucuses of those denominations, and our work in public education and Christian Social Action were funded with a multi-million-dollar war chest.

But none of that is true. The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches sends two salaries, rent and telephone funds to the support of this office. The Director's salary is \$7,920 a year, the Administrative Assistant's salary is \$6,000 a year. All money for postage, printing, xeroxing, supplies, travel, and so forth must be raised outside of the UFMCC General Fund. We rely on you, not for a "multi-million-dollar war chest," but just for survival. For the \$400 to pay for an issue of *A New Day*, the publication of the Washington Office. For postage, paper, pens, and typewriter ribbons. For the ability to continue our ministry and our Christian witness.

There are people who think of themselves as Christian who would destroy much of what we are fighting for. There are who are no doubt very sincere, but who are totally opposed to the kind of love, acceptance and freedom we are longing for in the world. There are reactionary politicians who are using our fellow Christians to foster hatred, bigotry and death. We believe God calls us to life! We believe that God loves all of God's creation! We believe that "all are one in Christ Jesus," regardless of sex, race, nationality, economic status, education, handicap, or sexual orientation. And we believe that we are called to witness this abiding love God has for us to our brothers and sisters in other religious groups, as well as to those who are entrusted to run our government.

“And with this recent victory, they now are trying to convince Congress that the tide is turning in favor of homosexuality and that Congress must pass a national Gay Rights Bill. I'm sure you can see the danger.”

But, as always, we need your help. We ask for your prayers as we continue to face this new threat to liberty. We ask for your prayers as we try to dialogue with other Christians about our fundamental disagreements, about what we believe God calls us to. We ask for your support and for your help. †

R. Adam DeBaugh is UFMCC's Social Action Director.

Let us never forget that this world
and everything in it belongs to God.
But not all of this world's citizens
recognize or give allegiance to their Creator.

Who are they who truly love and serve God?
It is they who discover and live
within God's purposes for their lives.
It is they whose hearts and hands
are dedicated to God's will for them.
It is they who turn away from self-centered concerns
to live for others about them.
They can count on God's perpetual blessings.
They nevermore need to be concerned
about their personal salvation.
They have been delivered from such anxiety
to focus their efforts on communicating
God's eternal love to humanity.

Let us look up and live!
God is present in all God's glory and majesty.
Let us go and celebrate!
Our loving Lord is here with us
and will manifest Godself through us.
We are God's vehicles and vessels.
We represent God in all God's saving power.
We are God's beloved and empowered servants
in this world that God created.

Psalms 24, taken from *Psalms Now* by Leslie F. Brandt



MILLER *cont'd from pg 24* many needs of the constituency are not even heard, much less met. One church, however, exists specifically to minister to the needs of gay persons. In 1968 the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) — a gay Christian church — was founded by Troy Perry. Today there are over ninety UFMCC churches all over the world, including the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, Union of South Africa, and Nigeria, with a total membership over the twenty-thousand mark. UFMCC began by simply wanting to put itself out of business; that is, when other churches opened their doors to the homosexual lifestyle, there would be no need for the UFMCC. Obviously, the foreseeable future offers little hope. Meanwhile, UFMCC has begun to grow and mature and to realize that it is not simply about gay Christians. Because from the beginning it sought to reach across denominational boundaries, UFMCC has become a concrete step in ecumenism. It is moving and amazing to see Pentecostals, Catholics, and Baptists working together.

Moreover, UFMCC has consciously decided to confront sexism in its ranks. UFMCC learned that women in the leadership means women in the congregation. Of the seven presiding elders of the UFMCC, one of whom is the founder Troy Perry, three are women. The leading evangelist preacher of UFMCC is a woman with feminist consciousness. Moreover, at their General Conference in Washington, D.C. in 1976, UFMCC resolved to gradually but actively change the sexist language to inclusive language in liturgy, song, and scripture. It went a step further and stated that it "recognizes the spiritual growth among all women at this time and affirms its eagerness to learn and grow from feminist theology." There are exceptions on the local level, of course, but they are decreasing. Thus, UFMCC has become much more than just a "gay church".

Most of these gay religious groups are found in large metropolitan areas, or in "newsletter" form only. The larger metropolitan areas provide the still necessary anonymity which allows homosexuals to gather without fear of exposure and harassment. The UFMCC, Dignity, and Integrity are found in most metropolitan areas. The other groups, excluding the UUA, and a few chapters of the Presbyterian Gay Caucus and Lutherans Concerned for Gays, are not yet developed into local chapter groups. The UFMCC is finally beginning to break into more rural areas, such as Wichita, Kansas; Joplin, Missouri; and Quincy, Illinois.

The concern for lesbians and sexism in gay religious groups goes beyond sexist language and the need for women in leadership positions. Within the gay subculture itself there is very little gay male/female interaction. Thus, the ignorance of the unique problems of lesbians by male homosexuals, not to mention society at large, is almost overwhelming. For example, a large percentage of lesbians, approximately one third, are mothers. Extreme child discord is a common result of a lesbian couple bringing two sets of children into one family. Children often have no concept that they are now part of a new family. Lesbian couples may thus be forced to separate. Many lesbian mothers live in constant fear of exposure by irate husbands and the loss of their children. The whole process of lesbian mothers entering the job market for the first time is also foreign to most males. The problems and concerns of lesbians who are not mothers only adds to this list. This is where churches must minister.

Many lesbians have left the Church altogether, regardless of their stance on homosexuality, primarily because of the apparent lack of concern for their needs. Other lesbians have begun to turn to alternative modes of spirituality and are forming covens, entering witchcraft, etc. There are still lesbians such as myself, however, who are struggling to awaken the Church to new insights and perspectives. These are women who have discovered a core of truth and faith, a Reality, within the patriarchal religion that supersedes and disavows the sexism. Their intuitive, wholistic, relationship-oriented perspective calls attention to people's *needs* and not their *shoulds*, to the process and not the goals, to the community and not the individual. These are women of vision who dare to call the established and the radical, the male and the female, the gay and the straight, into one community of believers.

There is no place for the lesbian to lay her head, but there are plenty of places to dig in. I see that her digging and her Awareness may yet free the world from its "words". For myself, I must keep in touch with the Reality of loving and being loved, of wholeness, of "not knowing" but trusting, as I experienced as a child. It is all I have. It is all we need. †



CURETON *cont'd from 9* They have to so love those who are stoning them to death with the scriptures that the true nature of God can be seen in their response. How are the ones hurling the stones to know that unconditional love is possible now if they never experience it? I think we are very close to the meaning of "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Another teaching that has taken on a more urgent meaning is "to whom much is given, much is required." If God has given us insight and understanding, we must share it. We may no longer cling to the safety of waiting for someone else to lead. Each of us must assume the risk/responsibility/privilege of exploring our own relationship with God and sharing it for the good of each other — loving one another — wanting to share the joy of our glimpse of the multi-faceted One God.

To be really specific, we can no longer cling to the safety of sharing our spiritual journeys only with those whom we already know agree with us.

If we believe that God can be seen in many ways, and that the human soul is nourished by increasing perceptions of God, then to refrain from sharing our views of God with those who perceive other dimensions than we have is to condemn them to a stagnant relationship with God and probable enmity with each other and themselves.

The more we see and know of God's ways, the more we know of God's nature, the more we are able to bring the truth of God to bear in a situation. The truth frees and enables itself — it is self-perpetuating — it is the Gospel! It works, too.

If we believe that sharing God, as revealed in Jesus the Christ, heals fear, loneliness, and separation, then it's time we extend that into action to touch the fear and anger that is within, instead of dividing into separate camps that tolerate each other. Toleration is lukewarm death! It condemns people to a static spiritual state (which really is not static — if we are not growing in union with God, we are increasingly malnourished and growing apart).

As we approach this conference I remind you that our first responsibility is to love God, which is to love each other, also. To learn to enable that is our ministry, lay and clergy alike. To learn to embody that is to work out our salvation. To reflect God for the sake of God, and with a compelling compassion for others, is to walk in the Spirit. †

TROY PERRY *continued from pg 14*
work best, when we use as the basis of our interactions the principal of love for God and love for others.

If our goal is living in union with God, then a measure of our process of doing that is provided by God and involves an awareness of our relationships with those with whom we share community.

Scripture teaches over and over again that our relationship with others is both a measure of our spiritual growth and a witness to others of our God and our Creator. "If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples." (John 13:35).

"Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:8).

"If I say 'I love God', but I hate another person, then I am a liar. For I cannot love God, whom I have not seen, if I do not love my neighbor, whom I have seen." (1 John 4:20, adapted).

Instead of using the measure that God provided for our own *individual* spiritual growth, we have all too often turned it outward to measure other people's spiritual conditions, again creating the condition of judgment in which creation is set at odds, pitted against itself for survival. This condition is known as sin. It separates and isolates.

The Gospel of Community is that humanity is not condemned to separation but may use the relationships and interactions of life to guide itself toward union/reunion with God, and consequently union with all creation.

God said "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God", and also that we will know "all things which I have taught you." In other words, you will know if you are on the right track because if you are, you *will* love my people and you *will* keep my commandments.

To live in community and apply God's revelation through scripture and the Holy Spirit is to use our own personal interactions and relationships to measure our own spiritual condition, seeking always to live in union with God, in God's perfect will.

An irony and tragedy of the Christian Church is that all too often its efforts to proclaim this have been misinterpreted and misunderstood and have become, themselves, one of the greatest obstacles to the establishment and growth of God's kingdom.

As the people of the UFMCC have begun to experience God's love and see

ourselves as a vital part of God's kingdom, we have responded with many helping services for our neighbors, gay and non-gay as well. Many of the local MCC congregations have "Deacon's Closets", a source of food and clothing for those in need. Pastoral counseling, peer counseling, hospital and nursing home visitation programs, community education projects, etc., are also important components of our outreach. The UFMCC sponsors one of the largest outreaches to the institutionalized population of any denomination our size. We ARE a community of God's people trying to live so that others can experience God's love through us. The Gospel is not confined within our church doors; we accept our responsibility to live it so that our universal community might know the good news of God's love first-hand.

The Gospel of Christian Social Action

The third aspect of the Gospel (perhaps a more concrete form of the other two) is that of *Christian Social Action* — the good news that God's love and salvation are applicable to our everyday lives and that by applying the principals Jesus taught we can free ourselves and each other. In Jesus' first sermon recorded in scripture, he used the text from Isaiah 61:12, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." From the reading of scripture and history we know that Jesus practiced what he preached. Our most basic definition of Christian Social Action is perhaps "practicing what we preach." When Christ found social wrongs, he confronted them. When traditions or human legal systems conflicted with the Gospel, he was true to God's system rather than humanity's. He taught and healed on the sabbath; he redefined people's relationship with God and with religion; he always treated people with love and respect, even when they used it against him.

Of all the aspects of our ministry, this is probably the least understood. In our years of ministry, we have heard many say that the UFMCC is "too political", trying to say that we will be "spiritual" OR

"involved in Christian Social Action." Rather than chastize them for misunderstanding, I try to share with them that God's message to me was that it is imperative that we, as Christians, do all that we can to stop the oppression of God's people — particularly when the oppression is based on human institutions and interpretations that conflict with God's revelation. If God's Spirit is to be seen by the people of this world it will be seen through the healing, life-giving work of people who are committed to making each of their actions Christian Social Action.

Catalyzed by the despair of soul that led to attempted suicide, and sustained by the commitment of the individuals of this Fellowship to live as God's people, the UFMCC proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Salvation, Community, and Christian Social Action. We are not fatalists that proclaim inevitable disaster, but instead try to see the events of our day in the context of God's revelation. Our response to the gas shortages, nuclear accidents, wars and rumors of wars, institutionalized hatred of one group of people by another, the killing of people of alternate life-styles, etc., is the bold proclamation that God has freed us from oppression by these things, too. We may indeed be living in the last days, but we do not seek to isolate ourselves within the church, on a hill-top, or in a cellar. We live in the world community, as a part of God's creation, and are committed to sharing that reality throughout the world. God has provided the opportunity to reach out to all the world to let people know that God loves them, and God has called the UFMCC into being for just such a time.

The vision that we share with the world is one of hope, of eternal salvation, of heaven on earth in community, of the end of oppression and degradation of people. The vision can become a reality as we worship together, wait upon the Lord together, and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our time. The UFMCC is "... for such a time as this." †



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the Board of Evangelism and World Missions, and Prison Ministry. The Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order was founded in 1973. The Publications Board, formed in December 1973, was established to develop and publish tracts, brochures, and other educational periodicals, including *In Unity*, the UFMCC magazine. Prior to the formation of this Board, the publications outreach of the UFMCC was handled by members of MCC-LA.

1974 was a year of global outreach. The Rev. Lee Carlton and the Rev. Perry toured Australia, and shortly thereafter, three new missions joined the MCC family — MCC Adelaide, MCC Melbourne, and MCC Sydney. The Rev. Carlton also visited Nigeria, and a work was begun in Zaria. Brussels, Belgium was the site of still another new work.

1974 was also the beginning of our collective belt-tightening with regard to ministerial requirements. The Elders passed a resolution opposing dual affiliation — MCC clergy were discouraged from retaining credentials in their previous denominations. It was time to jump to one side of the fence or the other. This indicates that the Fellowship was moving out of the concept of being a temporary, "half-way house" institution, into the challenge of building a growing, permanent, spiritual body. The current "collar code" for MCC ministers — full collar/licensed or ordained ministers; one stripe/exhorters; two stripes/deacons — was implemented in 1974. The Board of Elders expanded to nine members that year, and the Rev. Perry began working full-time in the Fellowship headquarters.

General Conference V (San Francisco, 1974), the theme of which was "There Is One Body, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism", brought together 39 churches, 13 missions, and 21 study groups (12,405 MCC'ers in all). At this conference, an annual missionary day was set for the second Sunday in February (currently it is the first Sunday in May) on which a special offering would be taken to further UFMCC outreach into other lands. The song "I'm Not Afraid Anymore" by Michael Herm Mank of San Francisco was adopted as the official UFMCC song by that conference. The Women's Commission was changed to the Commission on Women and was instructed to develop guidelines for non-sexist worship and an inclusive humnal. A proposal by this commission for a feasibility study on an inclusive translation of the Bible was defeated. There was a bomb threat during a major conference worship service, and the only amusing thing about it was that the police officers on duty ran for cover, while MCC folks continued to worship inside the church. The Christian Education Commission was established in 1974, whose objective is "that all persons be aware of God through God's self-disclosure, especially God's redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ, and enabled by the Holy Spirit, respond in faith and love; that as new persons in Christ they may know who they are and what their human situation means, grow as sons and daughters of God rooted in Christian community, live in obedience to the will of God in every relationship, fulfill their common vocation in the world, and abide in Christian hope."

The theme of General Conference VI (1975, Dallas, TX) was "We've A Story to Tell to the Nations", and the conference passed a resolution to hold an Affirmation of Freedom rally at General Conference VII (1976, Washington, DC). There was also a resolution to support the Senate assassination investigations, and warnings of an attempt on the Rev. Perry's life at the Washington, DC conference. The first racism workshop was conducted at this conference, and a Racism Task Force was formed within the Commission on Christian Social Action.

The theme of General Conference VII in Washington was "Proclaim Liberation In The Land". The most provocative action of that conference was the unanimous recommendation that every member church cease the use of non-inclusive language. One dis-

tasteful thing to come out at that conference was the hotel's assortment of cockroaches. Just ask anyone who was there. 1976 also saw more MCC churches tested by the torch. On August 14, Trinity MCC in Riverside, CA was destroyed by fire, followed by King of Peace MCC in St. Petersburg, FL October 4.

In January of 1977, the Ministerial Credentials and Affairs Committee expanded to nine members and established the subcommittees on Concerns and Standards. In July of that year, the UFMCC filed suit against the U.S. government to permit access of literature and people in the Federal Prison System. This case is still waiting to be heard in the courts. August of 1977 brought General Conference VIII, in Denver, CO, with the theme "Think On These Things". At this conference, delegates voted to make conferences biennial (every two years) instead of annual.

Currently there are 121 MCC congregations world-wide. Fellowship Commissions and Committees struggle to anticipate and satisfy people's needs. We are still not immune to conflict, evidenced by the current controversy over *The Gay Christian*. Yet, through it all we continue to grow in God's spirit, reaching out, a large diverse family seeking God's will for our communal and personal lives. In spite of the problems and growing pains, we touch others, sharing our confident proclamation that God's love embraces all people. It has been that vision which has brought us successfully through our first decade of ministry together, and as long as we keep our sights in line with God's revelation to and through us, it is that vision which will sustain us in the future. †

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